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ABSTRACT

This publication examines racial, ethnic, and cultural identity development in children in out-of-home care. In the field of foster care, the overrepresentation of children of color and the prevalence of cross-cultural placements compel practitioners and caregivers to attend to issues of ethnic identity formation. Information comes from focus group interviews with foster parents and youth and with alumni of the Casey Family Programs (which provides a range of permanency planning services for children and youth); interviews with practitioners; consultation with experts; and field notes from conversations with Casey staff and families at staff meetings and other functions. Part 1, "A Conceptual Overview," reviews and integrates the research and theory on ethnic identity and related concepts such as racial and ethnic socialization and social constancy theory. Part 2, "Ethnic Identity for Children and Youth in Out-of-Home Care," explores the implications and challenges of ethnic identity for youth in foster care and other out-of-home placements (e.g., the importance of birth family work for healthy ethnic identity, developmental issues in the formation of healthy ethnic identity, and characteristics of the placement that promote healthy ethnic identity). Part 3, "Implications for Practice," examines pre-placement and placement practices and discusses when to worry, highlighting environmental red flags related to system responsiveness, attitudes, and behavior. Specific recommendations for practice are presented. Appendixes contain a glossary of terms and an annotated bibliography. (Contains 77 references.) (SM)

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A Conceptual Framework

of Identity Formation in a Society of Multiple Cultures

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VISION:

Through bold action, constant learning and challenging public will, Casey will be recognized as a force for change in child welfare nationwide. We will encourage diverse communities to support stable, enduring families. We will help families, especially those in poverty and those of color, to raise healthy, resilient children. And we will use every resource we have to see that children put at risk by family circumstances have the means to grow into hopeful citizens with worthy futures.

MISSION:

To support families, youth and children in reaching their full potential.

In pursuit of its mission, the program is committed to advocating for improvement of public and private services for children and youth, particularly those in the nation's out-of-home care systems, and to serving a s a nationally recognized information and learning center in the field of child welfare

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

CASEY FAMILY PROGRAMS

Casey Family Programs is a Seattle-based private operating foundation, established in 1966 by Jim Casey, founder of United Parcel Service. Casey aims to positively impact the lives of increasing numbers of children and families in communities through direct and indirect service delivery. Casey provides a range of permanency planning services that include adoption, foster-adoption, kinship care, long-term family foster care, legal guardianship, family preservation and reunification. Approximately 1600 children and youths receive direct services through Casey's long-term family foster care, educational, vocational, and/or independent living programs. Casey touches the lives of another 5000 children and youths through local community collaborations and national partnerships. Direct and indirect services are supported by Casey's advocacy efforts, knowledge creation through research and evaluation, and shared learning about children in need of permanent family connections.

Casey Family Programs operates out of 29 offices in 14 states, serving children and families in the following communities: Arizona (Phoenix and Tucson), California (Pasadena, San Diego and Walnut Creek), Colorado (Denver), Hawaii (Hilo and Honolulu), Idaho (Boise), Louisiana (Baton Rouge), Montana (Helena and Missoula), North Dakota (Bismarck and Fort Berthold), Oklahoma (Oklahoma City), Oregon (Portland), South Dakota (Pine Ridge, Rapid City and Rosebud), Texas (Austin and San Antonio), Washington (Federal Way, Seattle, Tacoma and Yakima), and Wyoming (Cheyenne).

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A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF IDENTITY FORMATION IN A SOCIETY OF MULTIPLE CULTURES: APPLYING THEORY TO PRACTICE

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As our children grow, our greatest hope for them is that they are confident, happy and capable. These are all characteristics of a healthy identity. Identity development is an ongoing process that permeates our children's lives at all stages of development. For children in out of home care, who may struggle with issues of trauma and loss, this process is especially complex. For these reasons, a goal of healthy identity formation should influence all facets of our planning, from prevention to placement to transition.

A Conceptual Framework of Identity Formation in a Society of Multiple Cultures, focuses on racial, ethnic and cultural identity development of children in out of home care. Its development both evinces and supports *The Casey Model of Practice* statement that "all work is culture-based and contributes toward a body of knowledge that results in best culturally proficient practices."

This work has been intricate and satisfying. Like other PRP products, it has required the efforts of many hands and minds. We would first like to thank the Casey practitioners, parents, youth and alumni who shared their experiences and insights into this topic that they live everyday. We also want to recognize the Yakima and Tacoma Divisions for graciously providing staff support to conduct focus groups.

As always, we value the vision of our Sponsor, Ruth Massinga. Her passion for this work has inspired us toward a stronger product. We would also like to thank our Advisory Committee, Jean McIntosh, Jim Marquart, Sylvia Pizzini, Peter Pecora, and Miryam Choca, for their guidance.

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Thank you to the Casey Model of Practice Subcommittee Rose Quinby, Pat McDaniel, Fred Swan, Mary Annese, Niki LeProhn, Linda Wilson and Angela Van Valkenburg for their help in moving us toward integration of this work with the Model.

We acknowledge our reviewers for their thoughtful comments and suggestions that have helped us produce a better product. We also value the expertise of our editor, Virginia Senechal. Her efforts have further enhanced and refined our final report.

Finally, we are indebted to our Identity Formation Consultant, Ana Mari Cauce, and our primary writer, Jim Rodriguez. Their knowledge of this topic, flexibility and commitment to an excellent product has been essential toward the design and completion of this report.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Casey Family Programs is a Seattle-based private operating foundation established in 1966 to provide an array of permanency planning services for children, youth and families including adoption, fost-adopt, long-term foster care, kinship care, guardianship, and family reunification. Through national and local community partnerships, advocacy efforts, and by serving as a center for information and learning about children in need of permanent family connections, the Program aims to positively impact the lives of increasing numbers of children – in addition to those directly helped with foster care.

Casey Family Programs lists *valuing diversity* as one of the nine core competencies essential to fulfilling its mission and vision. The development of a Casey Model of Practice confirmed the lack in child development theory of a comprehensive multicultural foundation. This recognition led to the development of the *Conceptual Framework of Identity Formation in a Society of Multiple Cultures*, with a special focus on the process of identity formation within the context of the child's racial, cultural and ethnic background.

Identity development in a society as diverse as the United States is complex. Race and ethnicity, religion, nationality, immigration status, gender, and sexual orientation all play important roles in the development of identity. In the U.S. we simultaneously celebrate the rich cultural diversity that racial and ethnic differences offer, and fear or avoid the personal and interpersonal tensions brought about by ethnic and racial conflicts. In the midst of this complexity are Casey children and youth who may struggle with these issues in obvious and not-so obvious ways.

We have chosen to focus on ethnic identity for a number of reasons. Ethnicity is a vital and prominent aspect of life in the United States. Increased immigration from Asia and Latin America and higher birth rates among ethnic groups than whites signify a shift in demographics where people of color will represent 47% and Whites 53% of the U.S. population by the year 2050 (Martin & Midgley 1999). Ethnic minorities already make up the majority in many major cities, and in some urban centers 1 in 6 newborns are multiracial (U.S. Census, 1992, cited in Root, 1996). As a result of these demographic shifts, interest and empirical research on ethnic identity development have grown.

In the field of foster care, the overrepresentation of youth of color, the high number of multiracial youth, and the prevalence of cross-cultural placements compel practitioners and caretakers to attend to ethnic identity formation in youth to ensure that they are unimpeded in exploring a significant aspect of themselves. What is ethnic identity development? How does it develop with children and youth? How is ethnic identity a healthy and important aspect of development? What does it mean for children and youth in foster care? What can practitioners and caretakers do to foster it?

A Conceptual Framework of Identity Formation in a Society of Multiple Cultures: Applying Theory to Practice addresses these questions in some detail. To answer them we relied on

existing research and on qualitative methods of inquiry. Our methods of exploration into these complex issues included the following:

1) **Focus Group Interviews.**
   a) *Foster Parents and Youth.* On one occasion we invited Casey families to attend a focus group interview. Two families and one unaccompanied youth attended. In total, we interviewed three parents (two White and one African American) and four youths, ages 14-17 (two White, one biracial, and one African American). Parents and youth were interviewed separately, and the interviews lasted approximately 1½ hours. Interviews were audiotaped and transcribed.
   b) *Casey Alumni.* We invited Casey alumni to attend a focus group interview. All five attending were females between the ages of 18 and 22. One was African American, one biracial (African American/Native American), and three Native American. This interview lasted approximately 1½ hours, and was audiotaped and transcribed.

2) **Practitioner Interviews.** We conducted eight interviews with Casey Practitioners. We asked each practitioner to identify a youth in his/her caseload who displayed characteristics of a healthy sense of ethnic identity, then questioned the practitioners about critical aspects of these youths' development. All of the interviews were conducted over the phone, audiotaped, and transcribed. Interviews ranged in length from 1 to 2 hours.

3) **Expert Consultation.** Expert consultation was obtained in a variety of ways:
   a) *Casey experts.* Interviews with key Casey informants[1] explored issues related to identity development in general, and ethnic identity specifically, for youth in foster care. Notes from interviews were handwritten and transcribed.
   b) *Conceptual Framework Roundtable.* We distributed drafts of Parts I and II of the Framework to Casey and non-Casey experts, and organized a roundtable discussion. Casey staff included cross-cultural specialists and other Casey informants, as well as noted scholars and researchers who were contracted as outside consultants. Notes from the roundtable were handwritten and transcribed. The culminating activity of the roundtable was an exercise in which experts were asked to generate lists of implications for practice, which were then prioritized. These implications for practice became the basis for Part 3 of this document.

4) **Field Notes.** In some cases, information was obtained via informal conversations with Casey staff and families at staff meetings and other formal and informal functions.

Although not conducted to engage in a formal course of research, these interviews were invaluable in helping us to connect theory to practice, as you will see throughout this document in the numerous case examples and vignettes provided. The results of our interviews – and this document – are organized into three parts.

---

[1] Casey informants included members of the research division and supervisors.

Part 1: A Conceptual Overview is a review and integration of the research and theory on ethnic identity and related concepts, such as racial and ethnic socialization and social constancy theory. The overview is based on a human ecological model, wherein ethnic identity is seen as a complex, almost paradoxical process of developing an individual sense of self that is based on group membership and shaped by external forces. Though research on ethnic identity and socialization has grown in the 80s and 90s, the field remains in its infancy and, largely, two distinct areas of research. Thus, our review is an integration of existing knowledge and our best assessment of the relationship between two distinct constructs. As such, it is a useful contribution to these areas of research.

Part 2: Ethnic Identity for Children and Youth in Out-of-Home Care explores the implications and challenges of ethnic identity for youth in foster care and other out-of-home placements. It is based primarily on interviews with Casey youth, caretakers, and practitioners, but also includes some of the available research. Much of the available research on the topic focuses on the controversial issue of transracial adoptions and the impact on racial identity development, so our interviews with Casey staff, families and youth are a fresh contribution to the field.

Part 3: Implications for Practice is also based primarily on the interviews we conducted and on contributions and input from noted experts in the field including consultant scholars, Casey cross-cultural specialists, and members of the Casey National Cross-Cultural Advisory Committee. This section supplies specific recommendations for practice, as well as an overview to inform specific training and practice guidelines that are expected to follow.

The theoretical model is comprehensive, but we intentionally avoided a "cookbook" approach that "itemizes" the identity processes of different ethnic groups. We recognize that there may be variations in identity development processes across ethnic groups and for biracial, multiracial, and white children and youth,[2] but we wanted to focus on similarities rather than differences. The document is replete with examples and quotations from foster parents, youths, and professionals of different racial and ethnic backgrounds. We hope that the document will provoke discussion, foster creativity, and encourage practice that promotes positive relationships between the children and youth Casey serves and the groups they belong to.

[2] Though we have tried to be integrative, we decided to include a separate section on White racial identity development based on feedback from reviewers and experts.

A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF IDENTITY FORMATION IN A SOCIETY OF MULTIPLE CULTURES: APPLYING THEORY TO PRACTICE

PART 1

CONCEPTUAL OVERVIEW

At the heart of identity formation is the "challenge of preserving one's sense of *personal continuity* over time, of establishing a sense of *sameness* of oneself, despite the necessary changes that one must undergo in terms of redefining the self" (Harter 1990). According to Erik Erikson, who best described this task, "each youth must forge for himself some central perspective and direction, some working *unity*, out of the effective remnants of his childhood and the hopes of his anticipated adulthood." During the process of identity development, youths will typically experiment with multiple selves and multiple roles – e.g., good student, daughter of an immigrant, best friend, devout Christian, civil rights activist, smoker, crusading lawyer, shoplifter, pro ball player. Some of these identities will be kept, nurtured, and committed to over a lifetime. Others will be briefly worn and discarded. The key, according to theorists of identity development, is to *integrate* these multiple identities into a *coherent* sense of self.

The shifting uniforms of youth, whether penny loafers and button downs, t-shirts and blue jeans, or boxer shorts and low-riding baggy pants, belie the paradoxical struggle of trying to be true to oneself without being too different from others. The danger in failing to develop a coherent sense of self is the inability to commit – whether to a career path, political or spiritual ideology, personal philosophy, or another person or persons. Without commitments, life goals, or a personal philosophy, youths are at risk for a host of problems throughout life. The obstacles to developing this sense of a coherent and competent self are vividly exemplified by rates of depression, delinquency, alcohol and drug use, and suicide that sharply escalate or peak during the adolescent years, when identity formation is the central task (Erikson 1968). Though these unhealthy outcomes can be attributed to environmental causes as well, we would argue that failure to develop a coherent and healthy sense of self puts children at risk of such negative outcomes.

While the struggle for identity has always been fraught with risks, these risks have multiplied in the last century. Unlike centuries past, when one's identity was largely developed within a context of family and community embedded in shared cultural values, today's youth must choose from a cornucopia of options, with fewer permanent guideposts and markers than ever before (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Muraven, & Tice 1998). And, if it is hard for a White teen to figure out who he is while growing up in Ames, Iowa with his biological parents, how much harder is it for a biracial White/African American girl who has lived in six different homes, with families of different ethnicities, in five different cities?

The struggle for identity is also deepened by the inevitability that all youth will deal with multiple dimensions of identity. Religious affiliation, occupation, social class, gender, sexual

orientation, and ethnicity are just a few of the major dimensions that define one's identity. For some, the integration of multiple identity dimensions can be smooth. For example, the child who wants to be a minister because his father was one may have relatively few identity conflicts. Major conflicts result when various dimensions of identity come into conflict with one another, such as membership in more than one historically oppressed or marginalized group. For example, in some parts of the United States, external forces may foster and support a working class ethnic identity while suppressing or discouraging gay/lesbian identity development.

This manuscript presents a conceptual framework to guide our understanding of identity formation in a multicultural society. Notwithstanding the importance of multiple identities, we will emphasize the difficulties faced by youths whose task is quite difficult: youths of color in foster care placements. We will focus most closely on racial and ethnic identity development, a key aspect of identity formation.

In the first part, we provide an overview of theory and research on racial and ethnic identity development, with special attention to developing a common vocabulary and integrating disparate areas of research.[3] In the second part we draw from our work with focus groups and interviews with caseworkers and supervisors to describe the context for identity development for Casey youth. Identity development does not happen in isolation. In working with youths and families on issues related to identity development, we do so within the context of complicated pasts and presents. In the last part, we bring together our conceptual framework with what we have learned more directly from youths, families, and staff to better inform the Casey model of practice.

We recognize there are other important factors, such as gender and sexual orientation, that have profound effects on identity formation. We believe they are all interactive. The messages an African American boy gets about ethnic identity development are different than the messages an African American girl receives; a gay Latino youth faces different identity struggles than a heterosexual Latino youth.[4] Dealing with all these permutations, and the many more that are possible, is more than we can reasonably accomplish in one place. Nonetheless, we believe that this model can illuminate at least some aspects of ethnic identity development for most youths. Moreover, it is our hope that in more carefully exploring ethnic identity development we may come to understand other aspects of identity development not covered here.

In a similar vein, our report focuses primarily on the development of ethnic identity in children and adolescents of color. While the rapidly changing demographics of our society have made issues of ethnic identity more salient for White youth, theory and research addressing White identity development is still remarkably underdeveloped. Much of it has focused on how to raise White youth free from prejudice, surely a worthwhile task. But it is only in recent years that conferences have been held and papers published dealing with White racial identity development

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[3] Appendix B is a complete annotated bibliography of some of the books and articles that have informed the first section.

[4] For further discussion and issues about gender identity and sexual orientation, see the *Youth Sexuality Sourcebook* (1999) published by Casey Family Programs as a resource for Casey Divisions and Offices.

more directly. We have devoted a section of Part 1 of this document to a summary of some of the extant research. This will be an important topic to expand upon as it develops, but will not be at the forefront of the present exploration.

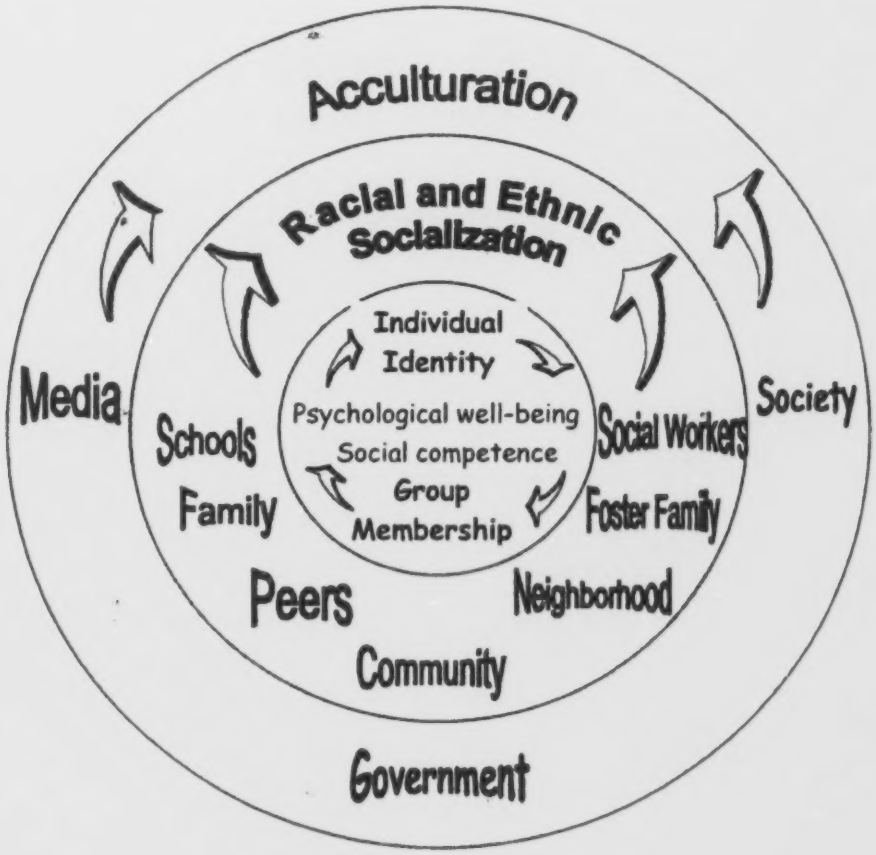
The model we present is comprehensive, but we have tried to avoid a "cookbook" approach that itemizes the identity processes of each ethnic group. Although we recognize that there will be variations in the identity development process across ethnic groups and for biracial and multiracial as well as White children and youth, we wanted to focus on *similar* processes across groups rather than differences. The document is replete with examples and quotations from foster parents, youth, and professionals of different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Service organizations and regional offices may want to adapt and/or add to this framework so that it is best suited to their specific setting and the cultural group or groups they work with. We hope that the document will provoke discussion, foster creativity, and encourage practice that promotes a positive and healthy sense of ethnic identity for the children and youth Casey serves.

AN ECOLOGICAL APPROACH

Our conceptual overview is adopted from the ecological systems approach developed by Bronfenbrenner (1977), which reflects the layers of context in which the person develops (see Figure 1). The outermost circle represents acculturation, the process of change that occurs at an individual or group level when two groups come into contact. In a society of multiple cultures, government policies, media stereotypes, prevalent societal values and beliefs, institutional racism, prejudice, and discrimination toward people of color all affect individual identity formation. In this report we focus on the processes associated within and between the two central circles, ethnic socialization and ethnic identity development.

FIGURE 1: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK.

The person develops an individual identity that is based on group membership in the context of messages received from significant others, all within a broader society in which race and ethnicity have a high degree of salience.



Ethnic socialization refers to the messages children and youth receive that influence the way they behave, think, and feel about their ethnic group membership. The process of ethnic socialization can be direct and indirect, tacit and explicit. The family (including biological, foster and adoptive parents), extended family, peers, teachers, and social workers all have a direct socializing influence on children. Ultimately, these proximal socializing influences affect the way children view themselves and how they interact with others in society. The innermost circle in Figure 1 represents the core of identity formation in a society of multiple cultures – the dynamic, almost paradoxical interplay in developing an ***individual*** sense of self that is based on the knowledge and experience of one's ethnic ***group*** membership. In this respect, the self is viewed as extended and interactional, and not narrowly individualistic (Stevenson, Reed, Bodison, & Bishop 1997).

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ACCULTURATION

Acculturation refers to change that occurs in response to contact between different cultural groups. Acculturation theory has been used to explain the cultural change that typically occurs when immigrants come in contact with a new host culture. There is a great body of research related to the process of acculturation and the resulting stress experienced by various acculturating groups (see Berry, Kim, Minde & Mok 1986 for a review). Here we use acculturation as the basis for understanding an individual's psychological development in a society where race and ethnicity are definitive. On an individual level many, and perhaps most, Americans define themselves as members of an ethnic or racial group, simply because of the ever present and growing diversity in this country.

Immigration from Asia and Latin America increased dramatically in the 1990s, and birth rates among people of color are higher than for Whites. In addition, people of color, as well as White European Americans, must contend with and define themselves in relation to the majority culture, including the racism and discrimination that are prevalent in it (Ogbu 1997). Our national diversity is played out in the broader society through media images, governmental policies (e.g. affirmative action), and general societal values. Space limitations for this paper preclude more detailed explanation of these issues, but suffice to say that in a society of multiple cultures, race and ethnicity are salient themes. How children and youth feel, act and think about diversity is directly related to how they are socialized to do so through the messages they receive from significant others in their lives.

RACIAL AND ETHNIC SOCIALIZATION

Socialization refers to the transmission of culture, which includes rules of conduct, traditions, and practices. How children incorporate the culture transmitted to them will influence their social identities and self-concept (Knight, Bernal, Garza & Cota 1993a, 1993b). Children and youth develop a sense of self in the context of messages they receive from parents, extended families, peers, social workers, and teachers.

Theory and research on ethnic socialization has blossomed in the 1990s and advanced our understanding of how parents and significant others teach children of color about race. This research also sheds light on the effects of those messages on identity development. For example, research suggests that African American parents teach children (a) how to develop a sense of cultural pride, based on their group's social and political history and accomplishments, (b) how to get along in the mainstream, and (c) how to deal with racism and discrimination (Bowman & Howard 1985; Spencer 1983, Stevenson, Reed, & Bodison 1996; Thornton, Chatters, Taylor & Allen 1990).[5]

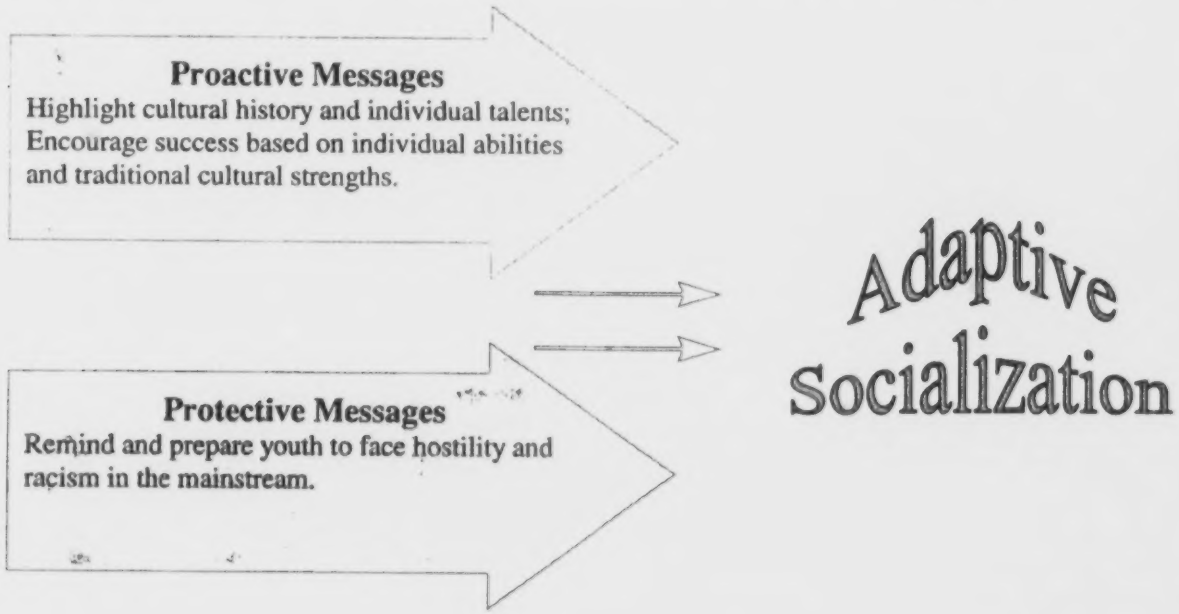
Work by Howard Stevenson and colleagues (Stevenson 1997, 1998; Stevenson, Reed, Bodison & Bishop, 1997) suggests that these socializing messages may be both *proactive* and *protective*, and

[5] These themes emerge from work with parents, but research suggests that others (e.g. extended family members) can play just as significant a role in the ethnic socialization process as parents.

that youth of color do best when they receive both proactive and protective messages related to ethnic socialization. ***Proactive*** messages highlight cultural history and individual talents, and encourage children and youth to succeed as a function of their individual abilities drawing from traditional cultural strengths. ***Protective*** messages remind and prepare them to face hostility and racism within the mainstream culture and allow them to anticipate and identify, and hence cope with, racist encounters. In combination, these messages represent ***adaptive*** socialization, which builds a realistic awareness of injustice without thwarting hope for the future. Stevenson et al's (1997) research suggests that adaptive socialization promotes healthier psychological outcomes among adolescents. Figure 2 illustrates the relationship between proactive and protective messages and adaptive socialization.

FIGURE 2: ADAPTIVE SOCIALIZATION.

Stevenson conceptualizes racial socialization as the process of communicating messages that shape one's identity over the life-span. Messages can be proactive or protective, and a balance of proactive and protective messages represents adaptive socialization.



The terms *proactive* and *protective* refer to the content of messages given. However, messages also differ in context (*planned or reactive*) and form (*explicit or subtle*). ***Planned*** activities are purposeful and are generally delivered with proactive content. An example of a planned proactive message occurs when a parent sits to read a Native American picture book with her young Native American child, and comments on the virtues or physical features of the main

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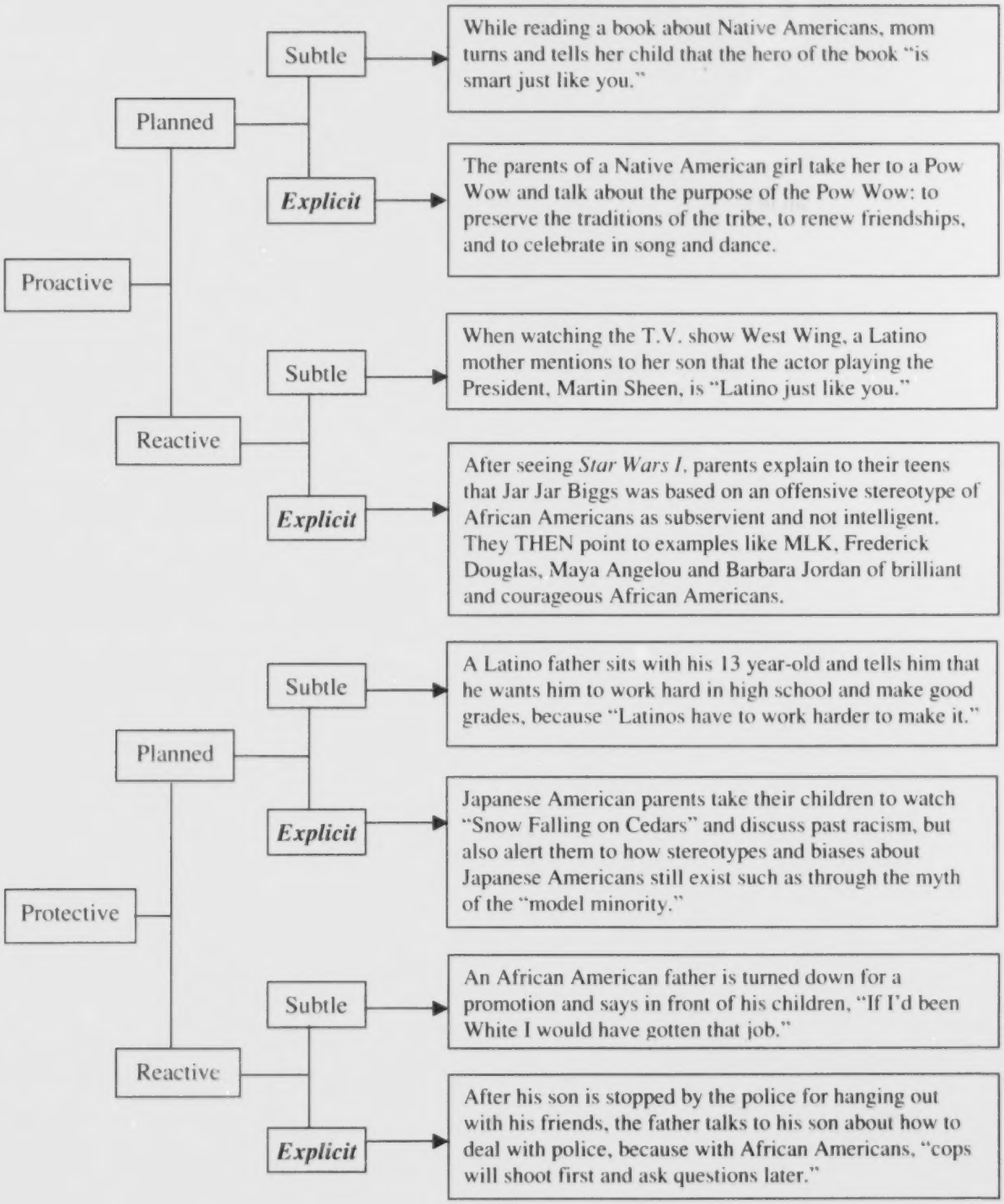
character (e.g., "Kamanya is smart just like you."[6]). Highlighting the child's individual talents while pairing the message with the image of another person of the same race or ethnic background is important because, although ethnic-specific books are more available now than ever, positive ethnic images are generally represented less often in school texts and the general media. ***Reactive*** messages are typically delivered in response to a situation or to capitalize on a particular "teachable moment." For example, when a child comes home saying that she was made fun of because of her race or ethnicity the adult can only be reactive, but can choose proactive content (e.g. "don't worry about that, you are beautiful, smart, and part of a group with a great history), protective content (e.g. "in life, people will treat you badly because of your race and ethnicity) or some combination of the two. The content should vary depending on the age and developmental level of the child.

The form of messages can be ***explicit*** or ***subtle***. Although explicit messages may be consistent with the proactive/planned type and subtle messages may be more protective/reactive, any message could be sent in an explicit or subtle form. This distinction is important because adults, in general, will be less aware of the subtle messages they pass on to children and youth (Pinderhughes, personal communication, June 24, 2000). For example, by avoiding any conversations about race or ethnicity or ignoring situations that arise, adults may unintentionally send, by act of omission, a subtle message that race or ethnicity is unimportant or not to be discussed openly. Figure 3 provides some examples of the types of messages that can be sent by parents.

[6] Kamanya is a character in *The Shaman's Apprentice* (Cherry & Plotkin, 1998), the story of a young Indian boy growing up in the rainforest of Suriname and his dreams of becoming his tribe's next shaman.

FIGURE 3: EXAMPLES OF THE VARIOUS TYPES OF MESSAGES THAT CAN BE SENT BY PARENTS.


Proactive
Planned
Subtle
While reading a book about Native Americans, mom turns and tells her child that the hero of the book "is smart just like you."
Explicit
The parents of a Native American girl take her to a Pow Wow and talk about the purpose of the Pow Wow: to preserve the traditions of the tribe, to renew friendships, and to celebrate in song and dance.
Reactive
Subtle
When watching the T.V. show West Wing, a Latino mother mentions to her son that the actor playing the President, Martin Sheen, is "Latino just like you."
Explicit
After seeing Star Wars I, parents explain to their teens that Jar Jar Biggs was based on an offensive stereotype of African Americans as subservient and not intelligent. They THEN point to examples like MLK, Frederick Douglas, Maya Angelou and Barbara Jordan of brilliant and courageous African Americans.
Protective
Planned
Subtle
A Latino father sits with his 13 year-old and tells him that he wants him to work hard in high school and make good grades, because "Latinos have to work harder to make it."
Explicit
Japanese American parents take their children to watch "Snow Falling on Cedars" and discuss past racism, but also alert them to how stereotypes and biases about Japanese Americans still exist such as through the myth of the "model minority."
Reactive
Subtle
An African American father is turned down for a promotion and says in front of his children, "If I'd been White I would have gotten that job."
Explicit
After his son is stopped by the police for hanging out with his friends, the father talks to his son about how to deal with police, because with African Americans, "cops will shoot first and ask questions later."

In sum, this discussion of the content, context, and form of messages describes the ways by which children and youth are socialized to reach three goals:

- to learn about their cultural background and traditions
- to be prepared to deal with racism and discrimination
- to get along in the mainstream

Children and youth of color will be exposed to a multitude of experiences and messages throughout their lives, some of which adults will have control over and others that will be beyond their control. Controlled messages can be effective throughout the life of the developing individual. For example, parents may rely heavily on planned, proactive messages to teach young children about cultural traditions. By the pre-teen and teen years, parents may begin to prepare their youngsters for racism and discrimination by introducing protective themes. Adults should always be prepared, however, to react to situations that arise and to capitalize on "teachable moments" to talk to children about their race, ethnicity and culture, prepare them for life in the mainstream, and prepare them to deal with racism and discrimination.

The following are some principles that may be followed in using the various types of messages across the life span:

1. **Proactive planned messages should be used liberally throughout the life span.** These messages are extremely important during the early childhood and school-age years to build a positive racial self-concept.
2. **Protective messages should be used less often in proportion to proactive messages.** When protective messages are sent they should be coupled with some proactive content.
3. **There should always be a greater proportion of planned messages than reactive messages, because adults can give thought to how they phrase certain messages.** If adults are only reacting they may be unprepared for handling necessary discussions about race or ethnicity, and in the heat of the moment may send messages not consistent with their own values (Hughes & Chen 1999).
4. **Adults should always be ready and willing to have explicit discussions about race or ethnicity.** Whether the messages are proactive or protective in nature, adults should not hesitate, and should be prepared, to discuss race and ethnicity throughout the life-span.
5. **Adults should always strive to be aware of the subtle messages they send.** They should not assume that children and youth are too young or inexperienced to understand or be affected by certain actions or words.

PROACTIVE MESSAGES: TEACHING ABOUT CULTURE

Teaching children about their culture can include teaching the traditions, customs and celebrations of a particular culture, as well as the sociopolitical history of the group in the United States. Celebrating Kwanzaa and teaching about the Civil Rights Movement in America are some ways that African American parents might teach children about their culture. Native American parents may prepare their children for their naming ceremony or talk to them about

other Native American traditions, tell them creation stories, and talk about great Native American historical figures. Immigrant parents may teach their children the language, traditions, foods, and customs of the culture of origin. Whether imparting these values by example or more intentionally, teaching children cultural history and pride, especially at an early age, provides them with a source of affirmation in a society that more often than not promotes negative stereotypes of minorities. Research suggests a relationship between proactive socializing messages and certain psychological states. For example, adolescent males who have been socialized to appreciate their own culture are less likely to lash out in anger when faced with racism and discrimination, and depression is lessened among females (Stevenson 1997).[7]

PROTECTIVE MESSAGES: PREPARATION FOR RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION

Studies suggest that children of color benefit when they are prepared for the racism and discrimination they will encounter outside the home (Marshall 1995). Although they may be exposed to racism and discrimination early in life, there is a slight increase in such messages during or just before adolescence (Hughes & Chen 1999). As parents prepare their children for dealing with racism, they may also promote some distrust of the mainstream. For example, when a teenage African American male learns to drive, his father might teach him how to deal with being stopped by the police. Law enforcement practices like racial profiling and/or the prejudices or stereotypes held by individual police officers increase the likelihood that an African American man will be stopped for offenses like "driving in the wrong neighborhood." Moreover, once stopped, many believe an African American male is more likely to be the recipient of police violence, including being shot, if he simply gives the appearance of resistance (see Time Magazine, April 3, 2000). This is an example of how protective messages can be, and sometimes need to be, planned and explicit. While parents may not want to promote distrust, healthy suspicion of "the system" combined with encouragement to achieve in the mainstream may help some youth succeed as well as survive. Adults must be cautious, however, when using messages that promote mistrust, because when relied on heavily and used to promote stereotypes (e.g., "All Whites are not to be trusted."), these messages can have deleterious effects including poor peer and intergroup relations (Hughes & Chen 1999).

Ethnic socialization is a process that requires adults to be ever vigilant for opportunities to help children and youth process racially and ethnically salient events. In the best of circumstances, both proactive and protective messages can be conveyed to children during "teachable moments." Talking about police harassment while helping a young African American man prepare for his driver's license exam is an example of a teachable moment. Discussing cultural diversity and tolerance for other cultures during a newscast about Native Americans and whaling is another. By keeping alert to such moments, ethnic socialization can take place in a manner that is both seamless and effective.

GETTING ALONG IN THE MAINSTREAM

In a society as diverse as the United States, children and youth not only acquire the norms, attitudes, and behavior patterns of their own ethnic group, they are also exposed to a variety of

[6] This research has been conducted with African American males.

other groups (Rotheram-Borus 1993). One group that all minority youths need to deal with is the majority[8] or mainstream group, which is generally defined as White and middle class. There are some mainstream values not shared by all ethnic groups in the United States – for example, rugged individualism or the belief that success is defined by individual achievements. In some ethnic groups, "success," individual achievements, and individualism are defined differently. In Latino and East Indian cultures, success is attributed to the support and nurturance of the family, and in Native American culture individuals are defined by their tribal membership. Yet, for children of color to successfully get along in the mainstream, they must learn to effectively function within a society that rewards behaviors reflecting values such as individualism.

Teaching children of color the values of their culture of origin alone can lead to a diminished ability to function in the mainstream; whereas focusing solely on preparation for the mainstream can lead to *assimilation*, or loss of a separate identity and pride in distinctive cultural traits (Davis 1978). We believe it is preferable to help children develop both – a sense of self based on their group membership(s) and their ability to get along in the mainstream. This promotes multicultural competence,[9] which is associated with a host of positive psychological outcomes such as positive self-esteem, same race and intergroup relations, motivation, achievement, prospects for upward mobility, and positive racial attitudes (Bowman & Howard 1985; Branch & Newcombe 1980, 1986; Gonzales & Cauce 1995; Phinney, Cantu & Kurtz 1997; Phinney & Devich-Navarro 1997; Roberts, Phinney, Masse, Chen, Roberts, & Romero 1999).

In some instances the expectations for behavior in one's ethnic group and the expectations for behavior in the mainstream may be in conflict. For example, in the mainstream, children are expected to communicate in standard English. One way that some parents teach their children to get along in the mainstream is to instill in them the importance of learning two languages or linguistic codes. Contrast "You're in America – speak English" with "We speak Spanish at home, but you need to speak good English to do well in school and in a future job." The former statement promotes assimilation and the latter multicultural competence. At the root of multiculturalism is the ability to "code switch" and recognize which behaviors are most appropriate in specific cultural settings. Just as some children may learn that t-shirts and shorts are appropriate for play, but not appropriate to wear to church or temple, others learn that it's ok to speak "Spanglish"[10] with bilingual friends or family members, but not in the classroom or even with their monolingual Spanish-speaking grandparents.

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[8] Although our definitions of "majority" and "minority" are changing with demographic shifts, by "mainstream" or "majority" culture we refer more to power and influence than actual numbers.

[9] Most of the literature focuses more specifically on biculturalism, which refers to getting along both in the "mainstream" and in one's culture of origin. We have chosen to refer to multicultural competence both because society is becoming increasingly multi- (not just bi-) cultural, and to reflect the fact that many Casey children are multiracial and must sometimes learn two cultures of origin in addition to getting along in the mainstream.

[10] This term refers to an informal dialect used by acculturating or acculturated Hispanic youth in which Spanish is spoken with the infusion of English words or phrases.

Teaching their children how to get along in the mainstream often includes explicitly teaching them that people of color must work harder than their White counterparts in order to succeed.

FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE ETHNIC SOCIALIZATION

Although research in this area is sparse, there are numerous factors known to influence ethnic socialization in the home. These include generational status, skin color, and the parent's own experiences with racism, to name just a few. First generation Mexican-Americans may focus more on teaching children cultural traditions and the Spanish language, while second and third generation Mexican-American parents may focus on other themes such as dealing with racism and discrimination.[11] Parents also prepare their children in a way that is consistent with their own experiences, including perceptions of racial bias in the workplace. Thus, a Japanese-American mother who has worked hard to succeed in corporate America but feels she has hit the "glass ceiling" may talk to her teenage daughter about racism and discrimination when her daughter begins to express her own professional aspirations. This is an example of a protective message given in response to a teachable moment.

It should be noted here that these examples are used only to illustrate a point. There is currently little research that examines the relationship between parents' experiences, the messages they give to their children, and the actual impact on children or youth. However, research on ethnic socialization and children's identity development consistently shows that parents who strongly identify with and value their ethnicity desire the same for their children. Such parents strive to raise children who value their ethnic heritage (Bowman & Howard 1985; Dennedy-Frank 1982; Knight, Bernal, Cota, Garza, & Ocampo 1993; Stevenson, Reed, & Bodison 1996). In general, children who are socialized about race and ethnicity are further along in identity development than children who are not (Spencer 1983). These children also demonstrate a greater sense of ethnic identification and awareness (Knight et al. 1993; Marshall 1995) and more positive mental health outcomes and competencies (Parham & Helms 1985a, 1985b; Phinney & Chavira 1995; Pyant & Yanico 1991; Taub & McEwen 1992). These are traits to cultivate in Casey youth.

ETHNIC IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

As we have just noted, there is a strong relationship between how parents socialize their children vis-à-vis race and ethnicity and how children come to view themselves and their ethnic group membership. Nonetheless, it is important to clarify that while ethnic socialization primarily refers to behaviors, attitudes, and values that parents communicate to their children, ethnic identity is a personal process that develops within the child or youth.

Identity development is a fundamental aspect of human development and the primary developmental task of adolescence. During the adolescent years, young people:

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[11] These changes over generations may occur because, while immigrant families often come to America seeking opportunity and the American dream, over time and across generations teaching about racism and discrimination may become necessary as barriers to opportunity are faced. See John Ogbu (1991) for a discussion of primary and secondary cultural differences.

- begin to develop identities separate from those of their parents;
- explore and commit to identifications with a number of different groups including gender, religion, age, occupation, political ideology, and sexual orientation; and
- begin to prepare for adult roles.

In order to become productive, independent, and well-adjusted adults, adolescents must create an identity that is cohesive. A cohesive identity allows them to choose careers, mates, and religious affiliations that make sense to them and from which they gain meaning and gratification. The process of ethnic identity development is similar to the process of ego identity development described by Erik Erikson. Like ego development, it involves exploration and commitment to an identity. While various conceptualizations of ethnic and racial identity development have been advanced (see for example, Atkinson, Morten & Sue 1998; Cross 1971, 1991; Phinney 1989), the process typically involves four main stages:

1. relative unawareness,
2. emerging awareness,
3. exploration, and
4. commitment

We use the term *stages* because it provides a useful way to describe normative processes, but ethnic identity development is not necessarily a stagewise linear process. Individuals can progress directly from one stage to another, recycle repeatedly through stages, or remain at one stage throughout their lives (Parham 1989). Table 1 provides a brief overview of these stages and their precursors with some approximate ages when they occur. Column one describes the development of social constancy, or the process by which children of color come to understand that their race or ethnicity is fixed and immutable. The development of social constancy overlaps with the early stages of ethnic identity development (column two). The ages that correspond to the stages of ethnic identity development are intentionally wide-ranging to illustrate that the process typically can, but does not necessarily have to, follow a stepwise sequential process from early childhood to adulthood. Not only can the process begin in later adolescence or early adulthood, but also adults can revisit stages (except for relative unawareness) throughout the course of their adult lives.

TABLE 1: STAGES OF SOCIAL CONSTANCY AND ETHNIC IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT.
Social constancy is seen as a precursor to ethnic identity development.

Age*	Social Constancy[12]	Age*	Ethnic Identity[13]
2-5	RACE OR ETHNIC AWARENESS Child becomes aware that there are different races or ethnicities.[14]	2-16	RELATIVE UNAWARENESS Child or youth recognizes race/ethnic differences, knows what race or ethnicity he/she belongs to, but race or ethnicity has low salience and is not yet an important aspect of life.
3-6	RACE OR ETHNIC SELF-IDENTITY Child identifies as a member of a specific race(s) or ethnicity (ies).	5-21	EMERGING AWARENESS Child or youth comes to understand the ***social*** significance of race/ethnicity (e.g. that race/ethnicity is an important facet of the social order.)
3 – 9	RACE OR ETHNIC CONSTANCY Child realizes race or ethnicity is immutable and will not change with time.	9-25	EXPLORATION/IDENTIFICATION Child or youth begins to develop an understanding and appreciation of the ***personal*** significance of race/ethnicity in his or her life.
		14-25	COMMITMENT Youth develops a positive commitment to membership in an ethnic or racial group(s) and accepts the positive and negative aspects of both his/her own and other groups.

* Approximated

The first two stages, relative unawareness and emerging unawareness, can be seen as two interrelated sub-stages of a more general stage called *pre-exploration*.

[12]These stages are based on the work of numerous researchers and theorists (McAdoo, 1985, 2000; Garcia and Hurtado, 1995; Knight, Bernal, Garza and Cota, 1993)

[13] These stages are represent an amalgamation of the work of numerous researchers and theorists (Atkinson, Morten and Sue, 1997; Cross, 1972, 1991; Phinney, 1990).

[14] Children are typically aware that there are different races before they recognize different ethnicities. Likewise, we believe it is likely that children of color in less stigmatized ethnic groups or those with more White-like appearances may progress through the early stages at a slower pace.

RELATIVE UNAWARENESS

Amy, a 5 year old Korean American at a private preschool, is the only Asian American girl in the class aside from Lisa, a third generation Chinese American. Amy and Lisa are playmates in and out of school, but gradually, Amy distances herself from Lisa and avoids playing with her in favor of Ashley, a blond, blue-eyed girl. Noticing the avoidance of Lisa, Amy's mother asks her why she doesn't talk to Lisa anymore. When asked the question, she drops the Barbie doll she is playing with, covers her face with her hands, starts to cry and says, "Because she looks like me." Amy's mother later finds out that some White children in the preschool were making fun of Amy and Lisa and how they looked alike.[15]

At the first two stages of ethnic identity development there is a lack of exploration of one's ethnic or cultural background. We refer to the first stage as ***relative*** unawareness because in a society of multiple cultures, it is highly unlikely that children and youth can be completely unaware of ethnicity or race. As the vignette above illustrates, even children as young as five are aware of racial differences and the social significance of such differences (Garcia-Coll & Garcia 1995).

Research on social constancy indicates that by age five children become aware of certain aspects of their social selves like gender, race, and ethnicity. By age 6, they are able to self-identify by gender, race, and ethnicity. What young children are typically unable to do at this age is understand the personal meaning and implications of race or ethnicity within the larger society; thus, relative unawareness is a stage of development associated with younger children. However, it should be acknowledged here that although children are unaware of the broader meaning of race and ethnicity, they do receive explicit and subtle messages from others about the value and meaning of differences (Pinderhughes, personal communication, June 24 2000).

This stage of development does not only apply to young children; there are a number of ways relative unawareness can be expressed even into adulthood (Cross 1991). Expressions of an identity at the stage of relative unawareness may include:

1. **Low salience**: some people of color may simply place greater value on identification with religion, occupation, sexual orientation, or profession than with race or ethnicity.
2. **Social stigma:** some people of color may view their racial or ethnic group membership only as a hassle or problem.
3. **Negative reference group orientation:** some people of color endorse and believe negative stereotypes about their own group.
4. **Miseducation/Eurocentric Cultural Perspective:** people of color are products of an educational system that is monoracial and monocultural (White/Western) and that often

[15] A colleague provided this example.

minimizes the contributions of other cultures to American society, and may develop the attitude that "White is right."

These types of expressions can develop from constant exposure to negative stereotypes of people of color from the media and/or society at large in the absence of opportunities to interact with others like oneself or with positive role models. For optimal psychological health, the task for children at the stage of relative unawareness is the development of a sense of constancy – the understanding that I am Native American or Latino (or some combination of cultural groups) and the general belief that it is okay to be Native American or Latino. In addition, they must develop a positive image of their racial or ethnic group or groups.

The task for adults with children at this stage of development is to expose them to positive racial or ethnic group images, and to try to give them opportunities to interact with other children of the same racial or ethnic group.

EMERGING AWARENESS

> *In a wee wooden schoolhouse, something put it into the boys' and girls' heads to buy gorgeous visiting cards – ten cents a package – and exchange. The exchange was merry, till one girl, a tall newcomer, refused my card – refused it peremptorily, with a glance. Then it dawned upon me with a certain suddenness that I was different from the others; or like mayhap, in heart and life and longing, but shut out from their world by a vast veil.*
>
> - W.E.B. DuBois
> Souls of Black Folks, 1902

- An 11-year-old Chicano boy goes to an integrated junior high school and is called a "spic" for the first time.
- A 14 year-old girl who is half Filipino and half White comes home crying and tells her mother "the White kids say I'm not white and the Filipino kids say I'm not Filipino."
- A 12 year-old African American girl talks with her grandmother about what it was like to grow up in the Jim Crow south in the 1930s.

Emerging awareness occurs after an experience or accumulation of experiences that lead to an abandonment of attitudes associated with relative unawareness. There is a sober realization that in a society of multiple cultures people are sometimes treated differently and sometimes badly because of their racial or ethnic background. Often, as the third example above illustrates, this realization is based on knowledge of the documented history of oppression that a group has endured, and may lead to further exploration of one's ethnic group membership. There may be an "aha" that one's ethnic, racial or cultural background is significant in some way, which is all but inevitable in a society of multiple cultures.

Ethnic images are pervasive in our society (Garcia & Hurtado 1995), and identity development depends on how individuals deal with this pervasiveness. Particularly salient are media images

of people of color, which are limited, often negative, and sometimes essentialized.[16] Indeed, one of the functions of a strong sense of ethnic identity is to protect against racism, discrimination, or generalizations made by others about one's ethnic group membership (Cross 1995). For W.E.B. DuBois in 1902, a simple rebuff by a classmate led to a process of self-exploration that culminated in the founding of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

Not all react to emerging awareness in the same way. Cherokee students visiting the Trail of Tears monument will have different feelings and reactions. One student may be angry or depressed because of the way the Native Americans were treated, while another may feel pride that the tribes were able to persevere. One may feel resentful that the event has not been discussed in his American history class; another may be confused over how to feel. Each student will deal with the event differently in terms of how s/he feels, thinks, and acts regarding ethnic group membership.

Theoretically, the move through emerging awareness involves two steps: one first experiences an event and then personalizes it. An event may cause one youth to explore positive aspects of her group membership, while confirming for another her beliefs that ethnic group membership is only a deficit or stigmatized. The former interpretation can lead to movement into the next stage of development, exploration, and the latter can lead to stagnation at either relative or emerging awareness. The task for adults at this stage of development is to allow the child or youth to process racially significant experiences. It is also important at this stage to confront racism and discrimination as directly as possible.

Research on these first two stages, relative unawareness and emerging awareness, indicates that despite our multicultural society, it is not uncommon for adolescents to be at either of these stages. A study of high school students in California found that more than half of them had attitudes consistent with relative unawareness (Phinney & Chavira 1995). Another study found that emerging awareness is a common stage as late as college (Kohatsu 1993), which is not surprising given that it is not uncommon for people of color to find themselves exposed to predominantly White or mixed settings for the first time during college. It is important for foster parents and practitioners to understand that shifting ethnic composition, from one context to another, can significantly influence ethnic identity development generally and this stage in particular. Thus, moving to an all-White neighborhood or school from a diverse or same race neighborhood or school can set off this stage of development.

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[16] This term refers to the tendency of the media to promote the "essential" qualities of members of a particular ethnic group. Thus, negative stereotypes are sometimes replaced by images of African Americans as spiritual, Hispanics as family oriented, Asians as intelligent, or Native Americans as mystical. Though these essentialized images may be positive, they belie reality.

EXPLORATION/IDENTIFICATION

> *Vickie, a 12-year-old Native American girl, has been in foster care with Elizabeth since she was 2 years old. Elizabeth has supported Vickie's ethnic identity in a variety of ways: by maintaining contact with Vickie's tribe and birth family, and enrolling her in Native language and art classes. When a local tribe (not Vickie's) begins whaling once again, a major controversy brews between the tribe and anti-whaling activists. Vickie is conflicted; she doesn't want to see whales killed but also doesn't feel that one should interfere in the tribe's ceremonies. She and Elizabeth attend the tribal ceremony after the first whale is caught. That night she and Elizabeth come home, watch the animal protectionists on the news, and Vickie says to Elizabeth, "I still don't know about killing whales, but those people [the anti-whaling activists] need to learn more about the tribe."* (Practitioner Interview 1999)

During this stage of development, ethnic group membership becomes important to the individual seeking to explore his or her ethnic identity, based on the growing recognition that race and ethnicity are essential components of our society. Moreover, individuals begin to gain a sense of meaning from their ethnic group membership. Ethnic minority youth at this level of development embark on a deep exploration of their cultural heritage, which includes:

- a search for information about traditions and practices,
- a desire for intimacy towards others of the same race or ethnic group, and
- the search for a positive sense of identity (Phinney, Cantu & Kurtz 1997).

During this period ethnic identity may be a source of self-esteem for minority youth (Phinney, Cantu & Kurtz 1997), and they may feel euphoric and proud as they explore positive aspects of their racial and ethnic group membership. This stage can also be associated with negative views of the mainstream in general (Phinney & Devich-Navarro 1997) and Whites specifically (Cross 1991; Helms 1990). Such feelings may stem from (a) the knowledge that throughout American history ethnic groups have experienced racism and discrimination, and (b) a heightened awareness of racism and discrimination that grows out of earlier experiences.

There are three tasks for youth at this stage of development. The first is to ***explore, in depth, the positive aspects of one's ethnic group membership.*** It is important for children and youth to have opportunities to explore their cultural heritage, including its traditions, customs, heroes and heroines. The second task is to ***develop ways of functioning in the mainstream*** while also developing proactive ways of dealing with racism and discrimination. Life on the hyphen (e.g. African-American, Cuban-American, Mexican-American, Korean-American, Native-American) can be particularly difficult for some ethnic minority youth. Confusion, psychological instability, and emotional pain can result from conflicts over connection to one's own group and understanding of one's place in the larger society. Studies with Latino and Asian Americans indicate that the conflicting demands of two cultures may lead to psychological distress (Ramirez

1984; Sung 1985). In college students, this period of intense identification can result in low self-regard, low self-actualizing tendencies, high anxiety, and hostility (Parham & Helms 1985a, 1985b). Such stress may result from coping strategies that are inadequate for functioning in the mainstream or dealing with perceived and real racism and discrimination. Parents, role models, mentors, and community organizations can provide opportunities for positive involvement in one's own group as well as ways of coping in the mainstream. Peers can also provide support. For example, in a predominantly White school, Black students experienced a discovery of self through participation in Black student organizations (Ward 1990).

The last task for children at this stage of development is to ***develop an independent sense of self*** that is based on and connected with group membership. Though others can support a youth's cultural identity, youths must develop their own feelings, thoughts and behaviors and not simply mimic others. If a child or youth does not explore for herself the meaning and significance of group membership it is possible that she may develop an identity based primarily on the beliefs and attitudes of others. Likewise, it is important for youth to avoid cultural or ethnic encapsulation (Banks 1981); that is, the tendency to learn about or interact with only members of one's own ethnic group. Independent views, the ability to understand the meaning of one's ethnic group membership, and the desire to understand and learn about other cultures (including how racism and discrimination affect others) are characteristics typical of the next stage of development.

The task for adults at this stage is to help youths through their exploration. This is a critical juncture in development, so the adult must be patient and understanding. The adult may need to allow the youth to take an ethnocentric stance at first, and provide opportunities for full immersion in his or her ethnic exploration, including supporting the youth's need for intimate contact with same-group peers, mentors, and role models. Later in this stage, the adult may try to steer the youth to cross-cultural contacts to promote a more multicultural frame of reference.

COMMITMENT

> *"I used to want to be White, because I wanted long flowing hair and I wanted to be real light. I used to think that being light was prettier, but now I think there are pretty dark-skinned girls and pretty light-skinned girls. I don't want to be White now. I'm happy with being Black"* (Phinney 1989, p. 44).

Minority youth at this stage of development are mostly secure in their ethnic identity. Reinforcement and gratification stemming from group membership come from within rather than from external sources (Helms 1990). The youth with a secure sense of ethnic identity typically exhibits higher levels of self-esteem (Phinney & Chavira1992) and multicultural competence (Berry & Kim 1988; LaFromboise et al. 1993; Oetting & Beauvais 1991; Phinney & Devich-Navarro 1997; Ramirez 1984), and is better able to deal with racism and discrimination (Ward 1990, Phinney & Chavira 1995; Stevenson 1997) – all characteristics of optimal development in youth of color.

Commitment is not necessarily the conclusion of development. In a society of multiple cultures, where race and ethnicity are so continuously salient, there is a high likelihood that a person of color may revisit prior stages of development (except relative unawareness). Thus, the task for adults at this stage is to continue to provide support and guidance, and continue to use "teachable moments" to help youths or young adults make decisions about occupation, partners, and child rearing that may be highly influenced by their race or ethnicity.

WHITE RACIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

So far, the discussion has focused on the process of ethnic identity development among people of color. White ethnic enclaves throughout the United States (e.g. Jewish-, Italian-, Polish-, or Irish-Americans) evidence many of the same processes of ethnic identity, and derive the same sense of affirmation and belonging through membership in a particular ethnic group as do people of color. However, the experience of being White and the process of White racial identity development in America is not comparable with the experiences of racial minorities for a number of reasons. First, ethnic identity for members of these groups is often heightened by location in ethnic enclaves.[17] Once White "ethnics" leave these enclaves, the process of integrating into the larger White European society is easier because they share greater similarities in appearance and a common European background. The same cannot be said for people of color. Similarly, members of these groups have not experienced the persistent individual and institutional racism that people of color have.

There is a growing body of research on White racial identity development that derives from the realization that "Whiteness" in America is socially constructed and is closely intertwined with the history of racism in America, and more specifically, the history of Black/White race relations. This research indicates a very poignant aspect of White identity development in a society of multiple cultures. Though Whites tend to downplay, deny, or ascribe low prominence to race, many Whites still hold racially biased attitudes. Field experiments of White attitude development have shown that Whites who hold egalitarian, liberal, and antiracist views still exhibit pro-white biases. For example, White liberals are more likely to help a White motorist in trouble than an African American (Gaertner et al. 1997). In other words, White racism in our time does not necessarily mean blatant anti-Black sentiments, but can mean subtle pro-White biases.

With regards to racial identity development, research indicates that young Whites are ambivalent about race. Qualitative interviews with White youth in England suggest that they are generally less likely to wish to be another color than Black or mixed race youth, but this is not due exclusively to negative images about non-Whites. Overall, fewer young White people are likely to express that they are pleased or proud to be White, compared to Black or mixed race youth who express pride in being Black or biracial. White youth are more likely to say that skin color is irrelevant and that when they are proud of themselves it is as individuals and not as Whites

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[17] For example, Jewish Americans in Williamsburg Brooklyn, Italian Americans in Little Italys in New York and San Francisco, Polish Americans in Chicago, Swedish Americans in the Ballard section of Seattle, and Irish Americans throughout the United States.

(Phoenix 1997). Like fish in water, many White youth are free to largely ignore racial/ethnic context and identity development because these processes are easier for them.

However, some White youth fear that expressing pride in their Whiteness will be perceived as racist. This may suggest that they do recognize the salience of race, but tend to minimize its importance because they are unable to develop a positive and non-racist self-image.

The inability to develop a positive racial self-image can be detrimental to White youth's social functioning. White youth tend to feel they have no cultural identity beyond their nationality (Phinney & Chavira 1992; Phinney & Devich-Navarro 1997; Phoenix 1997). When asked about their ethnic identity, White American youth typically respond that they are American (Phinney 1992), and research suggests that American identity is a source of self-esteem for Whites, in comparison to non-Whites (Phinney & Devich-Navarro 1997). However, research also indicates that White working class youth believe they are disadvantaged because they, unlike their Black and other ethnic minority peers, have no cultural identity (Phoenix 1997). Research also indicates that ethnic identity and self-esteem are highly correlated for some Whites when they represent the numeric minority (e.g. in "minority/majority" schools), which suggests that under certain circumstances Whites can have a strong sense of ethnic identity despite belonging to the majority or dominant culture (Phinney 1992). Though research on White identity development is relatively new, it indicates that White youth seem to want to develop a positive racial identity that is culturally- (as opposed to nationality-) based and non-racist.

Helms (1984) developed a six-stage model of White racial identity that attempts to explore the development of non-racist White racial identity. The first three stages – *contact*, *disintegration*, *reintegration* – pertain to the process by which whites discover and confront racism; the last three – *pseudo-independence*, *immersion/emersion*, and *autonomy* – describe the process of defining a nonracist White identity.

Once one becomes aware of Blacks (for example) in a real or ideal sense, s/he enters the ***contact*** stage. The individual is cautious or timid around Blacks and may exhibit individual racism in a very unsophisticated superficial manner. If the person continues to interact with Blacks, other Whites may send the message that this is not acceptable behavior, and other Blacks may point out the differential treatment that Blacks receive in society. As these socialization experiences accumulate, the individual may enter the ***disintegration*** stage, characterized by increasing acknowledgment and conflict surrounding one's Whiteness. This stage may engender some guilt, anxiety, depression and helplessness as one begins to question racial realities. The person may try various strategies to help reduce these negative feelings including reducing contact with Blacks, convincing other Whites that Blacks are not inferior, or minimizing the importance of race and racism. If the individual willingly or unwillingly continues to have cross-racial contact s/he may enter the ***reintegration*** stage. This stage is characterized by a belief in White racial superiority. Feelings of anxiety and guilt are replaced by anger and fear towards Blacks. Behavior can range from distancing oneself from Blacks and discussing race only with those Whites who share the same views, to overt or covert acts to protect one's privileged place.

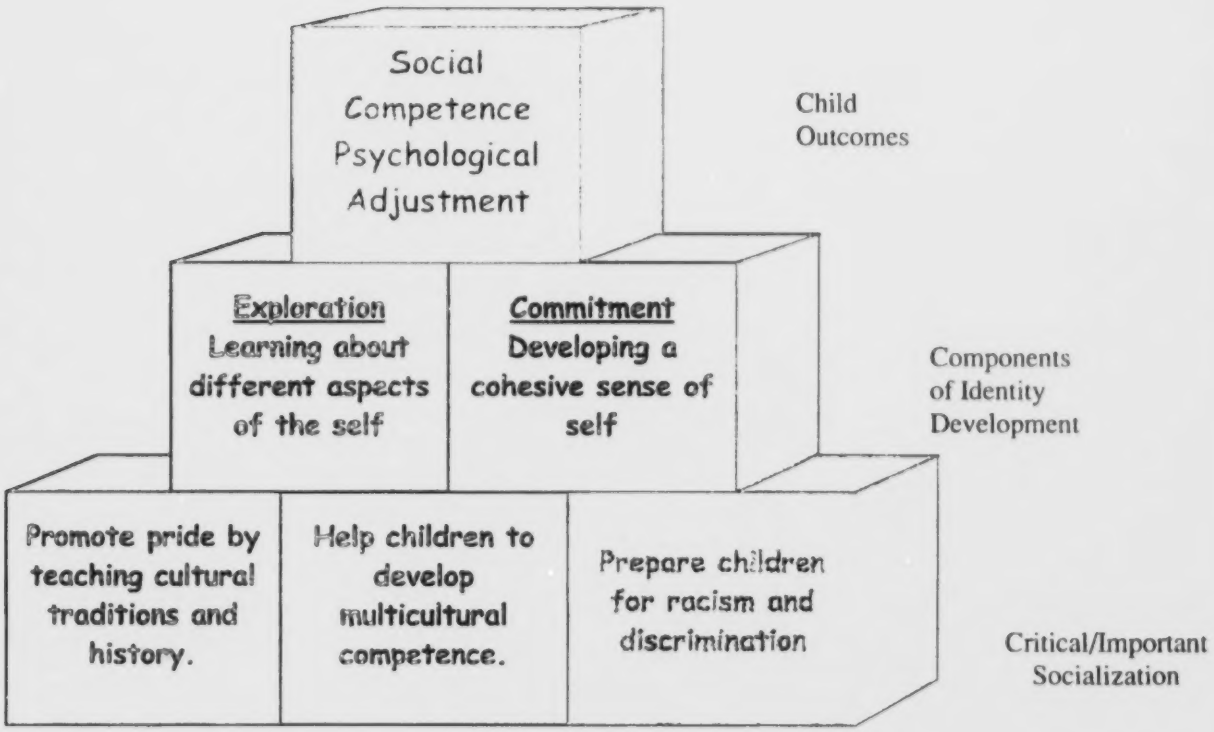
A personally jarring event, such as an overt act of racism that occurs in the community or the media, is needed to move a person into the ***pseudo-independent*** or ***liberal stage***. This is the first stage of defining a non-racist White identity, as one begins to actively question and abandon the belief in White superiority/Black inferiority. The individual has neither a positive nor a negative self-evaluation as a White person, and seeking greater interaction with Blacks often takes the form of trying to help them develop more like Whites. A person in this stage may feel marginalized, leading to a quest for a better definition of Whiteness. At the stage of ***immersion/emersion***, the person asks the essential question "What does it mean to be White in America?" and seeks a positive (non-racist) White identity. This is accomplished primarily by reading about or seeking interactions with other Whites who have made a similar racial journey. Internalizing the identity explored at the immersion/emersion stage leads to the final stage of ***autonomy***.

White youth can participate in a multicultural society in a positive and healthy way. As White youth become just one more minority group in a nation of many minorities, it is imperative that we expand our knowledge of ethnic identity development in this group.

THE BUILDING BLOCKS TO IDENTITY FORMATION IN A SOCIETY OF MULTIPLE CULTURES

We all wish for children to develop psychological well-being and social competence, to develop into contented, well-adjusted adults who are self-assured, able to handle stress, and able to get along with others. A healthy and committed sense of ethnic identity serves these goals. As Figure 3 indicates, identity is a critical feature of the development process leading to psychological well being and social competence, and is based in large part on the socialization process. The messages one receives about his or her culture, mainstream society, and how to deal with racism and discrimination will ultimately affect development of a healthy sense of identity vis-à-vis ethnic group membership. Together, these factors form the building blocks of identity formation in a society of multiple cultures.

FIGURE 4: BUILDING BLOCKS TO IDENTITY FORMATION IN A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY.


Social Competence Psychological Adjustment
Child Outcomes
Exploration Learning about different aspects of the self
Commitment Developing a cohesive sense of self
Components of Identity Development
Promote pride by teaching cultural traditions and history.
Help children to develop multicultural competence.
Prepare children for racism and discrimination
Critical/Important Socialization

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PART 2

ETHNIC IDENTITY FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN OUT-OF-HOME CARE

In Part 1 we presented a conceptual framework for the development of ethnic identity for all children and youth. For children in out-of-home placement, development of a coherent identity in general, and an ethnic identity in particular, is more challenging due to the additional stress and sense of impermanence that results from being separated from one's birth family (Salahu, Sakinah, & Bollman 1994). A child who has experienced multiple placements is exposed to multiple separations and parental figures. With each separation the child's sense of security and stability is diminished, and s/he must cope with the sense of failure and rage associated with loss (Steinhauer 1991). This increases the likelihood that subsequent foster placements will disrupt as well. Birth family turmoil, including extreme privation, abuse and neglect, and bi- and multi-ethnic background are other challenges to ethnic identity development that out-of-home care providers, social workers and, most of all, youth in placement must contend with. On the other hand, a stable positive relationship with foster parents can help a child or youth internalize new self-images based on how he believes he is seen by them (Steinhauer 1991).

In Part 2 we focus on race and ethnicity as an important consideration in the development of the relationship between caregiver and youth, and the identity the youth develops as a result of that relationship. Throughout this section we try to show what hinders and what helps that process. We draw primarily from interviews with Casey practitioners, parents, youth in foster care, and alumni of foster care. We use the term "out-of-home placement" to refer to children and youth in a variety of settings (e.g. long- and short-term foster care, adoptive homes, kinship care), with the belief that there are similarities in youth across these settings. When appropriate, we will distinguish between issues related to different types of placement.

WHAT IS A HEALTHY SENSE OF IDENTITY?

> *Tina, a four-year-old African American female adopted by a White family, is taking a bath, scrubbing her skin furiously. Her mother Janet asks Tina why she is scrubbing so hard, and Tina answers that she wants to take the color off her skin to "be more like you, Mommy."* [18]

Without a doubt, Tina will learn that the color of her skin will not change, yet anyone involved with Tina should pause to consider some questions. How will this experience affect Tina's future identity development? How detrimental is it for her to think for even an instant that the color of her skin is something she should change? What can foster parents or adoptive parents, be they of the same ethnic group or not, do to help children and youth develop a healthy sense of ethnic identity? Tina's example is used here to underscore a point made by many of the adults interviewed: ***ethnic identity development does not start in adolescence.*** A healthy ethnic identity develops over time, is based on early childhood and school-age experiences, comes to

[18] A colleague provided this example.

the fore during adolescence, and continues into adulthood. Experiences like Tina's are opportunities for parents to use teachable moments to deliver proactive messages, like "your skin color is different from Mommy's but it is beautiful and you should never want to change it." This message can promote healthy ethnic identity by teaching that difference can be positive.

Before we continue, it is important to explain what we mean by a healthy ethnic identity. Ethnic identity is more than just ethnic pride. Everyone is born into a particular racial or ethnic group, but people differ on how important their ethnicity is to them, how they feel about it, and how much their behavior is affected by it (Phinney 1991). For some youth, their ethnic group is a primary source of self-esteem, affirmation and belonging. For others, the primary source of identity may lie in their associations with other groups like a baseball team or school choir. Youths may also hold multiple identities that are highly salient. For example, a gay African American youth may find his sexual orientation to be as or more important than his ethnicity. Also, the importance of any component of identity (e.g. ethnicity) may grow or diminish depending on the setting one is in. For example, being a girl may be more significant for a child entering a foster family of all boys, where ethnicity is the same; for that same child, being Latina may be more relevant when she enters a family that is African American or European American (Pinderhughes, personal communication, June 24, 2000).

Ethnic identity may differ in degree but it is an aspect of development that most youth of color will contemplate at some time in their lives. It is not uncommon to encounter youths who deny being a member of particular racial or ethnic group, while others claim membership in a group other than their own. Some youth view their ethnic group membership as a social stigma and even promote negative stereotypes of that ethnic group. There are youths who refuse to affiliate with members of their own ethnic group, and others who affiliate only with members of their own group to the exclusion of others. Lastly, many youths of color struggle with racism and discrimination. Some internalize it; some are not able to recognize it when it occurs or are unable to distinguish between racist and non-racist events; some may recognize racism but are unable to respond to it in effective ways. Most observers agree that racism and discrimination in modern times are more covert than overt and thus more difficult to identify. However, in a society of multiple cultures, youths of color most often think about their ethnic group membership through encounters with racism and "racialized discourses" (Phoenix 1997) with others.

Based primarily on the model set forth in Part 1, we developed the following criteria to describe a youth with a healthy sense of ethnic identity. He or she:

1. Identifies as a member of a particular ethnic group or groups;
2. Has generally positive attitudes about being a member of that group, but also has a balanced view of the positives and negatives associated with it;
3. Affiliates with members of his/her own group, but is also generally accepting of people from other groups; and
4. Is able to cope successfully with perceived or real racism and discrimination and has possibly shown some effective strategies for dealing with it.

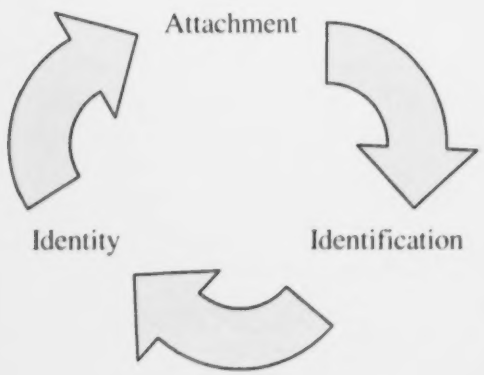
We asked Casey social workers to identify youth from their caseloads who meet the four criteria above, and inquired about their development, including the role of the foster family and social worker. The following are themes that emerged from those interviews, with comments and observations gathered from focus group interviews with caregivers and youths. These themes are not organized according to any particular order of importance; all were prevalent throughout the interviews.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BIRTH FAMILY WORK TO A HEALTHY ETHNIC IDENTITY

> *John, a 17-year-old Mexican American youth, has been in foster care since he was 4 years old. His social worker believes that John meets the criteria of a healthy sense of ethnic identity, but it has not always been that way. Following a school suspension for pushing a teacher, John told his social worker that Mexicans "don't wimp out of situations; [violence] is our way of doing things." He tells his social worker that his father was that way, even though he has had little contact with his biological father since he left his family of origin. However, John's description of his father was reliable; he was violent and promoted violence as a way to solve problems.* (Practitioner Interview 1999)

Nearly all social workers indicated the importance of birth family work in helping children and youth develop a healthy ethnic identity. There are a number of ways that the birth family can affect the ethnic identity development process, especially for youth who have experienced turmoil at an early age. Biological family turmoil, especially when experienced early in life, can adversely affect the cycle of attachment-identification-identity formation (see figure 4.)

FIGURE 5: THE ATTACHMENT-IDENTIFICATION-IDENTITY FORMATION CYCLE.



In general, for children young and old, the process of identity is based on this cycle, which starts with the ability to attach to others, primary caretakers at first but other adults and peers later on.

After attachment there is a period of identification where the individual begins to think and act like the caretaker (or other). Ultimately, identity is the result of a secure sense of self based on the positive attachments and identifications one makes with others. This process is circular in that healthy, secure attachments lead to a healthy and secure sense of self, which in turn leads to other healthy attachments. The process is particularly important from birth to age six, but continues well beyond these years.

Children in out-of-home care, like John, have generally not experienced the "good enough" parenting necessary to develop secure trusting relationships with others (Steinhauer 1991). The relationship between early attachment and loss and later identity development is critical. Insecure attachments resulting from abusive or neglectful parenting can lead to a variety of social and emotional difficulties, including mistrust and skepticism of others, withdrawal, depression, disturbed relationships, extreme aggression or over-compliance (Pecora & Downs 1999). Poor parenting can also lead to youths' diminished capacity to explore their environment with confidence (Harter 1985, cited in Steinhauer 1991). As a result of family chaos, conflict, and inconsistency, many foster children form a negative initial picture of themselves (Steinhauer 1991).

Through play, and particularly through the cognitive processes of ordering and grouping objects into categories, the toddler develops an increased understanding of what he is (that is, what categories he belongs to) and what he is not (Mussen, Conger, & Kagan 1981). Not surprisingly, many children in out-of-home care categorize themselves as unlovable and deserving of rejection (Steinhauer 1991). The ability to categorize objects continues to develop throughout the school-age years, and gets more sophisticated. It becomes the basis for how children process events in the environment and how they continue to categorize themselves. The significance of this for ethnic identity development later in life is that some children, like John, develop negative ways of seeing themselves that translate into maladaptive behaviors and thoughts. Negative early childhood experiences can interfere with ethnic identity by inhibiting the youth's ability to express who he is with confidence, venture outside his ethnic group to make friends, bond to positive role models, cope with ethnic identity struggles within his or her ethnic group, or cope effectively with racism, discrimination, and prejudice.

BIRTH FAMILY WORK: FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

> *Maria, 12, is of Native American descent, and has been in foster care since the age of 4. Her White foster parents have been great about maintaining contact with the birth family and providing as much information as possible to Maria about her birth mother, whose death prompted Maria's placement. In the presence of her foster mother, she gazes in the mirror one day and wonders out loud "do you think I look like my mother?"* (Practitioner Interview 1999).

Though birth family history is the source of a number of the challenges that youth in out-of-home care face, virtually all of the social workers interviewed emphasized the importance of birth family work in relation to ethnic identity development. As one social worker put it, "I think it's

very hard for a kid to even identify with an ethnic group or feel positive about it if there are holes there in the birth family [history]...it would be hard to say who I am if I don't know who my birth family is." (Practitioner Interview 1999). Although obtaining accurate birth family information is often difficult and/or the information obtained not positive, social workers nonetheless felt it was critical.

As John's story suggests, an unhealthy sense of ethnic identity can result from limited knowledge of, or contacts with, birth parents and family. Likewise, holes in the child's birth family history can be filled with detrimental fantasies about the birth parents. For example, Jason, a young first grader of Native American and African American descent in kinship foster care, often shared the story that his father was in jail for murder.[19] In this particular case the fantasy was worse than reality, since the father actually had abandoned the family and his whereabouts were unknown. A long-term goal for Jason would be to help him develop a picture of his father that is realistic and not based on negative stereotypes of African American or Native American men. Birth family work gives the child a three-dimensional understanding of the birth family that includes both positive and negative features. In the case of John, the Mexican American youth with the violent biological father, his older biological sisters shared in a family therapy session that, among other things, his father was sometimes gentle and had fun with John as a child.

In addition to overcoming or dealing with the past, social workers and foster parents approached birth family work with an eye to the future. They understood that it is inevitable for children and youth in out-of-home placement to wonder about or take a greater interest in their birth family history. Social workers facilitated birth family contacts or gave birth family information as much and as often as they could throughout a child's placement, out of concern that waiting could set the stage for giving too much difficult information all at once. One foster mother stated that she maintained birth family contacts and exposed her foster daughter to birth family culture to avoid resentment and conflict later in placement. She stated that if she waited for adolescence to do birth family work her foster daughter would have cause to ask, "why didn't you give me this information when I was younger?" (Staff Meeting 1999).

Other reasons given for the importance of maintaining birth family contacts in relation to ethnic identity development involved more subtle aspects of understanding race, culture and ethnicity in our society. One social worker told the story of a White foster mother who was driving along with her 10-year-old Native American foster child, following a visit with his birth mother. "You really like my mom," said the foster child, to which the foster mother responded "Yes" (Practitioner Interview 1999). In this case, the message the foster mother gave the child through her interactions with the birth mother was proactive and subtle. The birth parent contact provided the foster parent with an opportunity to model care and acceptance of difference. The foster mother accepted and showed care for the birth mother, faults and all, which gave the child approval to show acceptance and care as well. Because the foster mother was White and the birth mother Native American, there was also a subtle message supporting positive intergroup understanding. Had the foster mother been cold or disapproving of the birth parent, the subtle message sent to the child, intentionally or not, could have been that it is bad to be Native

[19] Personal experience of the author.

American.

Birth family contacts were also seen as important because they are often the only way for children and youth to learn to value or have a connection to their culture of origin. One White foster mother stated that by maintaining contacts with the birth family, her Native American child participated in many of the cultural traditions of her tribe, including the naming ceremony (Staff Meeting 1999). Some social workers pointed out that socio-economic status, income, region of the country, ethnic make-up of the neighborhood, and type of community (rural, urban, or suburban) all account for differences in culture within racial or ethnic groups. A social worker from the south noted that there are great cultural differences between Black families in rural vs. urban settings. In this respect, birth family contacts are as crucial in same race placements as they are in cross-cultural placements.

In the process of development, the average child identifies with his family and its attitudes, values and characteristics (Fenichel 1945). When the typical child reaches adolescence, the severity of the struggle for identity will depend on the quality of parenting received in early childhood. For children in foster care, the struggle is magnified by having to adapt to and accommodate the attitudes, values and characteristics of at least one and sometimes multiple additional families. When the foster family is of a different race or ethnic group the struggle may become even more complex. Moreover, if the attachment in any one family is poor, subsequent attachments will be poor or more problematic. Birth family work can provide children and youth with some continuity by acting as a bridge between the culture of the family of origin, where they first celebrate their ethnicity (McAdoo 1997), and the culture of the family or families to which they go.

DEVELOPMENTAL ISSUES IN THE FORMATION OF A HEALTHY ETHNIC IDENTITY

> *Nina, a 10-year-old Native American girl, is driving in the car with her foster mother and states "I don't want to be Native American anymore."*
> (Practitioner Interview 1999).

Social workers repeatedly discussed the issue of timing in relation to understanding the processes of ethnic identity development. For example, Nina's social worker noted that her statement was common for children of color at her age. Such comments can be explained in terms of the developmental theory of social constancy, wherein children at about age 9 or 10 can fully understand that their ethnicity is something that will not change. But if a child in foster care has been teased or ridiculed for the color of her skin, she may begin to deny or avoid thinking about being a member of that ethnic group. Denial or avoidance can curtail discussion and/or exploration of one's ethnic identity. Though Nina's social worker did not mention social constancy theory, she recognized the dynamic interaction of age and development and suggested that intervention should be redirected at exposing Nina to more positive images of Native Americans.

Timing was also considered important in talking to children or youth about developmental issues.

For example, how or when do you talk to a child about race when he doesn't want to, even though it is an important aspect of his identity? One social worker described the experience of Charles, a 16-year-old biracial (African American/White) youth who was apparently reluctant to discuss his race (Practitioner Interview 1999). He expressed to his social worker, in various ways, some hesitance to accept that he was half White. He had lived with his White biological mother until he was four, then went to a number of different foster homes. He spent the majority of his life in a biracial foster home that disrupted when that couple separated. He identified himself as Black but rarely wanted to talk about race beyond that. When there was a school dance, he was invited by an African American girl but decided to go with a male friend instead. Though many factors could explain Charles' behavior, the social worker recognized a connection between his hesitance to date the African American girl and his hesitance to deal with his racial identity. She decided not to force a conversation about the issue because she realized that Charles was socially immature, and expected that once he did decide to start dating the opportunity to have discussions related to ethnic identity would follow.

Most social workers also recognized that although it is often appropriate to respect a youth's disinterest in talking about race, ethnicity or culture, this should not be cause to avoid addressing the issues. One social worker, in addressing the need for birth family visits even when they may be difficult, stated "there are times when I've wanted to say 'the kid isn't ready' [but] I want to make pretty sure that I'm not saying 'I'm not ready.'" (Practitioner Interview 1999). Other social workers found that persistence sometimes pays off. For example, one social worker reported that she likes to expose the youth on her caseload to different types of activities such as motivational speakers, conferences of Black professionals or graduate students, art shows or performances. She observed that the youth are not always enthusiastic at first, but they will often remember such activities and bring them up for discussion later in the course of placement (Practitioner Interview 1999). A common observation of many social workers and foster parents was that they valued "teachable moments" and either created them or used naturally occurring teachable moments to discuss race, ethnicity and culture.

PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES ASSOCIATED WITH A HEALTHY ETHNIC IDENTITY

Social workers often described youth who displayed a healthy sense of ethnic identity as possessing certain personal attributes, including confidence, friendliness, and the ability to use others as resources. They noted that these characteristics were both directly and indirectly related to the youth's ethnic identity. In fact, one social worker stated that she would add, as an additional criterion for a healthy ethnic identity, the ability and confidence to express the uniqueness of one's ethnic group membership to people outside the group.

A causal link between ethnic identity and confidence or self-esteem is not supported consistently by research (McAdoo 2000; Phinney 1991). However, among the social workers interviewed, the confluence of ethnic identity and attributes like confidence were seen as having some protective value for youth. A strong ethnic identity can protect against challenges to one's overall identity development. For example, Angie, an African American 17-year-old in kinship foster care, was being teased by her cousins about trying to act White because of the way she dressed and because many of her friends at school were White (Practitioner Interview 1999).

According to her social worker, this young woman met all the criteria of a child with a healthy sense of identity: she attended an all-African American church, she participated in African American cultural events in the community, and repeatedly expressed that she "knew who she was," and did not care what her cousins thought. In time she began to hang out more with other African American students in school, but continued to hang out with her White friends as well. Throughout the period when she was being teased, she maintained a strong connection to her ethnic community and her sense of ethnic identity remained intact. The relationship between ethnic identity and associated personal attributes requires further study. In particular, what is needed is research that goes beyond self-esteem to explore the direction or degree of relationship between traits such as confidence and assertiveness and overall identity development.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PLACEMENT THAT PROMOTE A HEALTHY ETHNIC IDENTITY

Many of the youth in kinship foster care have a healthy sense of ethnic identity. Research suggests that a high level of contact and identification with birth parents is associated with higher self-esteem among youth in foster care (Salahu, Sakinah & Bollman 1994). In kinship foster care, there is a greater likelihood that children and youth will continue to have contacts with birth parents when they are available, and receive accurate information about parents via stories or recollections when the parents are not present. When parents are not available or there is little information about them, kin can help children and youth process intense feelings about birth parents such as rescue fantasies. For example, a 12-year-old Mexican/Filipino adolescent in a kinship foster home expressed his desire to save his mother from her drug addiction (Practitioner Interview 1999). The social worker reported that the boy's aunts had told the boy that they too wanted to help his mother, but that she had to try to help herself first. The social worker pointed out that this situation continues to cause the child psychological distress, but it is lessened by the aunts' interventions.

His aunts' involvement provided this child with the knowledge that close family members share in his concern over his mother, and that she will have the safety net of the kinship system available to her, which lessens the burden on him to save her. The social worker also believed that hearing this message from the aunts helped the child understand that, though his mother will always be a member of the family, only she can be responsible for her actions. Kinship foster care provides important same-race/ethnic group role models in dealing with difficult situations. In the example above, the young boy learned lessons about care and responsibility that will have an impact on how he views people of his ethnic group, and ultimately on how he views himself. Kinship foster care can also increase the likelihood that ways in which the foster family deals with such issues will be compatible with the way the birth family deals with them.

Kinship foster care is not a panacea for all the challenges to ethnic identity development for children and youth in foster care, and not all children in kinship care had a healthy ethnic identity. There were some distinguishing characteristics of the homes of youth with healthier ethnic identities. These homes:

1. exposed the youth to culturally relevant events and practices;

2. were positive role models;
3. had a healthy sense of ethnic identity;
4. had high expectations for success;
5. were willing to discuss race and were able to examine their own biases about other groups; and
6. were willing to listen when children and youth felt they were being discriminated against and investigated and acted on racism and discrimination when it occurred.

Some people we spoke to expressed doubts that children and youth in cross-cultural placements could develop a healthy ethnic identity, but it is almost certain that some children have.[20] One of the social workers we interviewed worked with a White long-term foster care mother who was raising a Native American girl with a healthy ethnic identity. The following are some of the characteristics this foster mother displayed and some of the things she did that contributed to the girl's healthy identity. Not surprisingly, the items on this list overlap with those of kinship foster care providers. This foster mother:

1. was persistent and patient in birth family contacts, enduring some years of feeling alienated from them until she was finally accepted;
2. exposed the child to activities that were culturally relevant;
3. respected Native American culture and traditions and was willing to learn more about them; and
4. was aware of the need to plan effectively for the child's ethnic identity development.

Based on our interviews, it appears that the quality of the out-of-home placement is at least as important if not more so than the race or ethnicity of the care provider. Certainly, kinship foster care providers offer the child some advantages that non-related providers cannot, and same race placements offer some advantages over cross-cultural placements. But the fact that many foster parents will, at some time, care for children who are racially or ethnically different from themselves suggests that we must train them to deal with ethnic identity development. The training must include substantive information on the process of ethnic identity development, as well as opportunities for practitioners and foster parents to explore their own ethnic identity processes. Moreover, we recommend that training be extended to all potential caregivers, as we cannot assume that healthy ethnic identity will automatically follow kinship foster care or same race placements. Further discussion of training is presented in Part 3.

In our interviews, race of caregiver was not the only factor contributing to ethnic identity. It appears that children in foster care are increasingly placed in situations that reduce the likelihood

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[20] There has been little research on the effects of foster care on ethnic identity for children of color (see McRoy 1993), but transracial adoption research suggests that adopted children suffer no ill-effects to overall psychological well-being. They do tend to be more acculturated to the mainstream and identify less with their racial or ethnic group.

of their developing a healthy cultural identity. In a study of biracial children placed in foster care, Folaron and Hess (1993) found that foster families were generally unassessed regarding:

- the racial composition of their neighborhoods, school districts, or religious organizations;
- their sensitivity to cultural issues;
- the extent of racism within the families; and
- the families' willingness and ability to become involved in multiracial and diverse cultural experiences.

"The need for careful assessment and training of potential foster caregivers was highlighted when one White foster parent reported that children of mixed racial parentage placed in her home were not troubled about racial identity. She explained, 'When the children are here, we tell them that in our home we just let our White sides show'" (Folaron and Hess 1993, p. 119). The prevalence of such attitudes is unknown, but they clearly indicate a need to examine and assess caregivers' attitudes and ability to meet the developmental needs of children of color.

Children of color and children of mixed race parentage tend to be over-represented among children in foster care, and there is a great likelihood that they will find themselves in foster homes where the parents are different from themselves ethnically or racially. When coupled with the fact that these children come primarily from homes where they suffered deprivation, neglect, and/or abuse by members of their own racial or ethnic groups, the chance of their developing poor ethnic or racial self-images is heightened. An understanding of ethnic identity is not only important for those parents who are different from their foster children; it is equally as important for families of the same race. In the next section we will review some of the implications of our findings for practice.

PART 3

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

In Part 1 we provided a conceptual framework for understanding the processes associated with ethnic identity development for all children and youth, and in Part 2 we discussed some of the challenges to ethnic identity development for children and youth in out-of-home care. In this final section we outline the practice implications for ethnic identity formation in general and ethnic identity for children and youth in foster care specifically. This section is based largely on interviews with youth, caretakers, practitioners, experts, and consultants in the field. It is not our intention to provide practice guidelines per se, but based on our interviews we have developed some recommendations that can be used to develop practice guidelines and training modules. Table 2 provides an overview of the stages of ethnic identity with healthy and unhealthy outcomes, and the tasks for adults throughout the stages. The table is presented for heuristic purposes, and as with many developmental models the stages and ages only represent an ideal. The age ranges in parentheses are intentionally wide to reflect the fact that children and youth in foster care may experience interruptions or delays in identity formation resulting from multiple placements. The low end of the range reflects typical, the upper end delayed or interrupted identity development.

TABLE 2: STAGES OF ETHNIC IDENTITY.

Stages (ages)	Characteristics	Positive Outcomes	Consequences if Identity Development is Inhibited	Suggested Task or Activities for Adults
Relative Unawareness (2-16)	Low salience: Race has little abstract meaning, but children are able recognize skin color differences and develop stereotypes and prejudices.	Awareness of self as a member of a racial or ethnic group (social constancy), and a generally positive feeling about it.	Without intervention, the child may develop negative stereotypes about own ethnic group.	• Expose child or youth to developmentally appropriate materials with positive and multiple images of people of the same and different ethnic groups. • Celebrate all cultures.
Emerging Awareness (5-21)	Experiences that raise awareness about ethnic group membership, including acts of racism and discrimination.	Protected self-image, and the beginning skills to combat racism, discrimination and negative stereotypes.	Sees group membership as a social stigma. Eurocentric cultural frame of reference.	• Give the child or youth the opportunity to process significant experiences, including those involving bias, racism, and discrimination. • Confront racism openly.
Exploration (10-25)	Search for information about traditions and practices. Desire for intimacy with others of the same race or ethnic group.	Greater appreciation and deeper understanding of one's ethnic group membership.	Feelings of inferiority, negative self-image. No coping strategies against racism and discrimination. Lack of ability to function with people of the same ethnic group.	• Provide opportunities to learn about culture and traditions, and associate with others of the same race or ethnic group including peers, mentors, and role models. • Send child to culture camp.
Commitment (14+)	Secure sense of self that is internally consistent and group oriented.	Positive feelings about one's ethnic group membership. Deeper appreciation and desire to promote positive aspects of own "culture" and people of different ethnic groups. Skills to combat and cope with racism and discrimination.	Insecure sense of self. Lack of positive sense of what it means to be a member of an ethnic group, or ethnocentrism. Poor coping strategies for racism and discrimination. Lack of closeness to other cultures.	• Continue support and guidance. • Continue to use teachable moments (e.g. decisions about occupation, partners, child rearing).

An often-used metaphor in the field of multicultural training is the River of Culture. This metaphor is useful in the present discussion because it invokes an image of a journey that at times can be smooth, at other times quite turbulent. A river can run shallow or deep, straight and narrow, or it can have twists and turns with precarious rapids. The river traveler can relax at times, but must always be vigilant and prepared to react quickly when rough waters come. Like navigating the river, helping children and youth develop a sense of self in a society of multiple cultures can be pleasant and enjoyable at times, as when people participate in festive cultural celebrations, but there are also the turbulences of discrimination, prejudice, and cultural insensitivity. At the beginning of the journey there must be great preparation, and in the course of it everyone has a role in dealing with the situations that arise.

We have chosen to divide this section into two broad sets of practices, ***fundamental practices*** and areas for concern or "***red flags.***" Fundamental practices represent the prescriptions – those aspects of practice that are necessary and promote healthy psychosocial outcomes. They may be thought of as the provisions that are necessary for the long journey on the river. Areas of concern or red flags may be likened to snags in the river – signals that alert practitioners or foster care providers to potential problems. Attention to the fundamental practices decreases the likelihood that red flags will arise, but in a society of multiple cultures, and especially for children and youth in foster care, red flags will arise despite our best efforts. In practice, the relationship between red flags and fundamental practices is reciprocal, because red flags provide a critical mechanism for system feedback. However, given that fundamental practices represent, in some ways, preventive strategies, greater attention is paid to them in this document.

FUNDAMENTAL PRACTICES

Fundamental practices can be divided into two broad categories, those that are necessary before placement and those that occur initially and throughout the course of placement. Table 3 summarizes the fundamental practices that will be reviewed in this section. ***Pre-placement practices*** are related to training and assessment, and ***placement practices*** are related to the proactive and protective strategies outlined in Part 1. Though presented in discrete boxes, the relationship between pre-placement and placement practices is circular. The practices used in placement directly with children and youth should be reflected upon routinely to inform training and assessment standards on an ongoing basis.

TABLE 3: STRATEGIES FOR HEALTHY ETHNIC IDENTITY FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN OUT-OF-HOME CARE.

PRE-PLACEMENT PRACTICES	PLACEMENT PRACTICES
Identity Formation Training for Staff and Parents *Training should include:* • Exploration of our own biases and prejudices, • Clarification of values and beliefs about the role of race and ethnicity in society, • Increased knowledge of and competencies related to ethnic identity development (e.g. ages and stages of development), • "How to" (a) help children and youth develop pride in their ethnic group and (b) respond to teachable moments.	**Proactive Practices**[21] • **Birth parent work:** Provide complete information about birth parents at appropriate developmental stages. Provide birth parent/family contacts where possible and appropriate. • **Prepare children to live in a multi-cultural society through:** *Dialogue:* Foster parents, practitioners and youth need to talk about race, ethnicity and culture. *Cultural Experiences:* Expose children and youth to cultural experiences that teach them their history and culture. *Cross Cultural Experiences:* Provide children with opportunities to learn about the experiences of people from ethnic groups other than their own. *Materials:* Provide children with access to information that affirms and provides some depth about the experiences of their particular ethnic group or groups. *Peers:* Ensure that children have contact with peers of the same ethnic or racial groups as early and as often as possible. *Mentors and role models:* Encourage positive role models, and facilitate contact with child's mentor or role model.
Assessment Levels: • **Parents and Casey Staff:** Self-assess one's own ethnic identity process, social status, role, external biases, and beliefs about the salience of race, ethnicity and culture in our society. • **Organization:** Determine if Casey structures, systems and attitudes are aligned with the goal of promoting healthy ethnic identity for children and youth. • **Home:** Gauge the family's ability to reinforce healthy ethnic identity formation for the youth. • **Youth:** Assess the child's ethnic identity status and where they are in the process of ethnic identity formation	**Protective Practices**[22] *Address racism, discrimination and stereotypes by:* • **Listening** to the child/youth. • **Clarifying issues** and determining if there is a problem. • **Intervening** with appropriate professionals if it is felt that the youth was treated unfairly. The practitioner will often work with the foster parent to intervene. • **Teaching survival strategies:** Discuss with youth of color how they are perceived in an antagonistic society and provide them with behavior strategies for certain situations.

[21] Proactive strategies are those that are intended to help children and youth develop self-understanding as a member of a particular ethnic group in a society of multiple cultures.
[22] Protective socialization strategies are those that provide children, and especially youth, with the necessary tools to cope with racism and discrimination in healthy ways

PRE-PLACEMENT PRACTICES

Training

One theme that emerged from our interviews is that greater attention needs to be given to training. The recommendations given for the type of training necessary to deal effectively with ethnic identity development differ from the goals and objectives of traditional multicultural training programs. In traditional programs, participants are given information about various ethnic groups, such as traditions and customs or behavioral characteristics like communication and coping styles. This type of training can be useful to some degree, but can also be detrimental in that it can lead to a false and superficial understanding of culture. It also fails to acknowledge the heterogeneity and diversity within cultures. More importantly, such training, which focuses on the external processes of culture and ethnicity, cannot prepare social workers to deal with the issue of ethnic identity development, which focuses more on the individual child or youth's internal processes and her relationship to her own culture. Thus, training to help children and youth develop a healthy ethnic identity must be focused on the developmental process itself, and must provide opportunities to ***help caregivers and staff explore their own ethnic identity processes, including any biases or prejudices.***

Another theme that emerged from our interviews is that caregivers and social workers must ***question the prudence of a "colorblind" perspective***, typically reflected in statements like "Every child is the same to me," or "I don't see a child's color." This can interfere with the ethnic identity process by minimizing or disregarding the salience of race in our society and in the life of the child. It might also keep an adult from providing youth with key experiences that are necessary for healthy ethnic identity development. As one mother stated:

> *I bought into the idea that you could raise colorblind children. And the older M gets the more I realize that that's not only impossible, it's undesirable. It's not colorblindness we ought to be looking for, it's appreciation. And I think for a long time I didn't recognize that being Asian was a big deal to him. I often think that he might not have struggled so much if I hadn't tried so hard to be colorblind...I would have already been talking to him about his ethnicity and finding people that he could look up to, and all that kind of stuff.* (Focus Group Interview 1999).

Other recommendations for training included developing ***competencies in identity development.*** Competencies should include knowledge and understanding of the ages, stages, and processes related to ethnic identity development; ability to understand the differences between culture, race and ethnicity as they pertain to identity development; and recognition of how key social markers such as gender, sexual preference, and social class interact with ethnicity during the identity formation process. Lastly, practitioners and consultants strongly recommended ***guidelines and training on "how to" a) help children and youth develop pride in their ethnic group and b) respond to teachable moments.*** Specific recommendations for the content of the guidelines and training will be discussed in the section on intervention strategies.

Assessment

One recommendation that received a great deal of support was that parents and staff should go through a vigorous assessment process (Roundtable Discussion 2000). The process should include ***a) self-assessment*** of one's ethnic identity process, social status, role, and biases and beliefs about the importance and significance of race, ethnicity and culture in our society; and ***b) assessment at an organizational level*** to insure that Casey Family Programs, from its leadership structure down, is aligned with the goal of promoting healthy ethnic identity for children and youth.

Pre-placement assessment should also include ***c) identifying specific aspects of the home*** in which the child or youth would be placed. These should include:

1. The degree to which the substitute family can reinforce the cultural group of the child or youth.
2. The degree to which the new family embraces the cultural experience of the child or youth as their own.
3. The degree to which the family is racist or believes in stereotypes or prejudices, especially about the racial or ethnic group the child belongs to.
4. The degree to which parents embrace attitudes that minimize the importance of race, ethnicity or culture in the life of the child (e.g. colorblindness).
5. The degree to which the family has experiences with others of the same racial or ethnic group as the child and how they evaluate those experiences.

Also needed at pre-placement is ***d) an assessment or case summary of the child or youth's ethnic status and where s/he is in the ethnic identity formation process.*** It is common practice for foster care workers to discuss aspects of the child's birth family history or placement history, such as the number and type of placements, the history of trauma, the school history, behavioral concerns, and developmental history. It is less common for practitioners to discuss the ethnic identity development of the child or youth. A summary should include:

- A discussion of the group or groups the child or youth identifies with,
- The level of identification with the birth parents or previous homes the child has lived in,
- The peer group s/he affiliates with,
- The ethnic composition of the child's previous neighborhood, and
- Any critical incidents that may be related to ethnic identity development and how the child or youth has dealt with them.

These practices are fundamental. Without attention to them prior to placement, ethnic identity development through the course of placement is less likely to occur smoothly and will in some cases (e.g. placement with a family that harbors racist beliefs) be detrimental to the child.

PLACEMENT PRACTICES

The second set of fundamental practices includes those that occur at the beginning and throughout the course of placement. These are the specific interventions necessary to foster the development of a healthy ethnic identity among children and youth in foster care. In Part 1 we discussed the proactive and protective messages parents use to socialize youth around issues of race and ethnicity. In our interviews we found that the interventions and strategies used by social workers and foster parents, and recommended by consultants and experts in the field, can be divided into these two general categories, which we have modified for application with youth in out-of-home placements. Stevenson (1997) has noted that there is no current research that investigates the integration of these different sets of strategies, but he suggests that integration would lead to psychologically healthy outcomes for African American youth. We, like Stevenson, believe that an integration of proactive and protective strategies will lead to positive outcomes for youth, including a healthy sense of ethnic identity for youth in out-of-home care. At the very least, these practices offer a solid point of departure for assessing ethnic identity development.

Proactive Strategies

Proactive strategies and beliefs are broadly defined as those that empower the individual to succeed as a function of internal talent and cultural heritage (Stevenson 1997). For the purposes of our discussion, proactive strategies are those that are intended to help children and youth develop self-understanding as a member of a particular ethnic group in a society of multiple cultures. Each child and youth is different and children will ultimately differ in the extent to which their ethnicity is important to them, but proactive socializing messages can help them develop a generally positive attitude about their own group. In addition, proactive interventions and strategies should include messages that facilitate intergroup as well as self-understanding. Proactive strategies include birth family work and preparing children for life in a multicultural society.

Birth Family Work

Birth family work was the most prevalent proactive strategy that social workers cited to help children and youth in out-of-home care develop the self-understanding necessary for a healthy ethnic identity. The following recommendations emerged from interviews with practitioners and foster parents.

The Impact of Birth Family Contacts. When the birth family is accessible, contacts need to begin at a young age and occur often. Ongoing contacts with the birth family provide the child with a sense of belonging, which can prevent feelings of rejection. These contacts can include attending regular family celebrations, such as birthdays, Baptisms, holidays, etc. The child does not have to embrace the birth family's cultural practices and traditions (although in some cases it would be desirable), but with frequent and meaningful contacts comes a sense of belonging to that family and its culture. Moreover, when a child or youth participates in the cultural traditions and

practices of his family of origin, s/he is less likely to feel like an outsider and less likely to develop negative stereotypes of his own family or its culture. These last two outcomes are particularly important in cross-cultural placements, where birth family contacts might provide the only connection the child or youth has to his culture of origin.

Deep and meaningful contacts with the birth family also provide an opportunity for assessment and intervention in the ethnic identity process. For example, one Native American youth, who spent time in both kinship foster care and cross-cultural placements, was told by her aunts and uncles that she acted too white, while her White foster parents said they appreciated the fact that she was Native American. For her, contacts with both her extended family and her White foster parents were instrumental in her development, and her social worker was instrumental in helping her deal with these conflicting messages in ways that were affirming to her identity and that helped her develop her sense of identity and her personal goals.

Information about Birth Parents. Birth family contacts and information can include more complex associations like family therapy sessions, which provide a deeper, three-dimensional picture of the family of origin and especially of the birth parents. Remember John, the 17-year-old who had developed the belief that all Hispanic males were violent based on childhood memories of his biological father? A family therapy session with his biological sisters helped him remember that his father could be nurturing as well. Information about the birth parents provides "grist for the mill" for dealing with how a child sees himself ethnically or racially.

During the school-age years it is very common for children in out-of-home care to wonder who and where they came from, and especially about their birth parents' physical features and attributes (e.g., "I wonder what my mom's hair was like?"). Contacts with the extended birth family or kin can help children get this information. Thorny birth parent information (e.g., drug use, personality characteristics and behavior) needs to be shared with youth as well, to give them a complete and balanced view of their parents, which is important in helping them develop a complete and balanced view of themselves.

Preparing Children to Live in a Multicultural Society

Preparing children and youth to live in a society of multiple cultures refers to a set of socializing processes designed to help them see life through a variety of lenses. Race and ethnicity are social constructs that hold meaning for the individual, and it is important for children and youth to learn that the way people view the world and relationships is historically bound. Strategies and interventions in this category are intended to help youth develop not only self-understanding in a diverse society, but also understanding and appreciation for the experiences of people from ethnic, racial or cultural groups other than their own. This set of practices includes dialogue, exposure to cultural and cross-cultural experiences, and the extensive use of cultural materials, peers, mentors and role models.

Dialogue. Foster parents, practitioners and youth need to talk about race, ethnicity and culture in a variety of ways. One foster care worker stated that she confronted foster parents when they engaged in racial stereotyping, and one youth talked about discussing racial stereotypes with her foster mother when she saw them occur in school. Practitioners spoke at length about the need to

use "teachable moments" to discuss salient events. One social worker suggested making a neutral comment about an interracial couple to invoke some conversation with a biracial youth on her caseload. Practitioners and foster parents also discussed the "use of self" in dialogues about race; that is, they talk about their own experiences, ethnic identity processes, dealings with racism, or attitudes about race, ethnicity and culture. This is an important aspect of practice and highlights the need to address these issues through training and self-assessment prior to working with children and youth in placement. Dialogue also includes discussing racially salient events that take place in the larger society and are reported in the media. Dialogues can occur in informal or more formal settings like intergroup dialogues on race, ethnicity and culture.

Cultural Experiences. Foster parents and practitioners often expose children and youth to cultural activities that teach them about their history and culture, which can result in pride in their own ethnic group. Activities that promote "cultural pride reinforcement" (Stevenson 1997) include taking children and youth to movies, college fairs (particularly those focusing on societies of ethnic professionals), cultural fairs or events (such as Pow Wows), museums, and motivational speakers. A key aspect of such programs is that youth get a chance to meet and interact with a variety of people of the same race and ethnic group, some of whom could become role models or mentors.

Cross-Cultural Experiences. These experiences include virtually the same types of activities outlined under cultural experiences, but serve a different purpose: to help children learn about the experiences of people from ethnic groups other than their own. They generally help youth develop an appreciation of cultures that includes both similarities and differences between groups. These experiences are often seen as the "feel good" or fun part of the process, but they can also have a more meaningful impact. As one foster child whose grandmother provided many of these experiences expressed:

> *Different cultures identify in different ways. And they have their own set of rules. And so me, by having a lot of different friends it helps me to not offend anybody. And to know where they're coming from...I can't be a friend with a whole person if I don't know their history... If I don't know them, then I'm afraid of them.* (Focus Group Interview 2000)

Materials. Children and youth need to have access to information that affirms and provides some depth about the experiences of their particular ethnic group or groups. The specific content of informational materials should:

- include the study of historical experiences;
- present people of color as active participants in society, as well as subjects of oppression and exploitation, and in the case of whites, as proponents and opponents of racism and discrimination;
- examine the total experiences of groups instead of focusing exclusively on the heroes and heroines; and

- help children and youth view and interpret events, situations, and conflicts from diverse ethnic and cultural perspectives.

Materials must be developmentally appropriate, but by and large can address the specific content areas above.[23] For example, materials for young children can include picture books that represent a child's background with a broad array of characters from their own group as well as characters from different cultural backgrounds. Even though it may be premature to talk to young children (younger than 6) about racism and discrimination directly, books can be chosen that address the issues of being treated unfairly or being teased, as a precursor to discussions about racism and discrimination later in life. For youth, books, movies, and museum exhibitions can be a great way to help them examine the total experience of their own and other groups.

Peers. Peers are an important part of adolescent development, especially in the early adolescent years. In terms of ethnic identity, peer relationships serve a variety of purposes. First, youths often define themselves by the peers they hang out with, thus peer relationships provide a key marker for reference group orientation. Through same-group peer relationships, youths of color gain a sense of affirmation, acceptance and belonging in their ethnic group. Second, peer group memberships give children or youth the opportunity to learn about the diversity within their own ethnic group. If isolated from members of their group, perceptions about them may be based solely on media stereotypes. In the case of cross-cultural placements, the problem is exacerbated because the immediate family may be unable to provide any exposure.

Contacts with peers of the same ethnic or racial group should occur as early and as often as possible in the child's life. When children live in neighborhoods and communities with members of the same ethnic or racial background, opportunities for same group affiliations will occur naturally. When such opportunities are not naturally or regularly available, adults need to create them. For young children adults can set up play groups, and school-aged children can be enrolled in formal activities such as team sports or scouts that have members from the same ethnic or racial background. Adolescents might be encouraged to join clubs at schools and in the community for members of their particular ethnic or racial group (e.g. First Nations, Black Student Union, MeCha). These kinds of activities provide at least the possibility that children and youth will develop relationships with prosocial, as opposed to antisocial, peers who can provide a sense of healthy belonging to their ethnic group (Pinderhughes, personal communication, June 24, 2000).

Adults should model these types of affiliations as well. In a notable example of what can occur when parents don't model, a 12-year-old girl failed to invite one of her closest friends, who happened to be Black, to her birthday party because "we don't invite Black people over."[24] In this case, the message was one that the mother had not given explicitly or desired, but it was clearly communicated by her own lack of cross group affiliation.

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[23] For a list of materials consult the Casey Web Site (http://caseyweb.casey.org/). In addition, the reader is referred to an article titled *Exploring Ethnic Specific Literature: A Unity of Parents, Families, and Educators* (Hansen-Krening & Mizokawa, 1997).

[24] This example was shared by a consultant.

Peers can present challenges to ethnic identity as well. Challenges from people outside the ethnic group come by way of put downs, ethnic jokes, or racial slurs. Peers from the same group can challenge one's ethnic frame of reference. For example, a fair-skinned child of color may be shunned by members with darker skin; or one who acts like or hangs out with people from ethnic groups other than his own may be treated like an outsider. These encounters cannot be overlooked because they often represent children's first awareness of themselves as members of a racial or ethnic group. Persistent exposure to unchallenged negative encounters can be detrimental to the child's self-concept and self-esteem. Parents must be vigilant and ready to talk to them about such encounters. Interviews with Casey youth suggest that when confronted with such experiences they are able to talk to their social workers or foster parents about them. Youth with a well-developed ethnic identity are able to cope with such challenges through self-affirmation (e.g., "I know who I am and I don't have to prove myself to anyone"). They also tend to affiliate with other youth who are affirming and accepting of their behaviors and actions.

Mentors and Role Models. Mentors and role models can play a critical role in the ethnic identity formation process. When asked about the people who most influenced their ethnic identity, many Casey youth and alumni stated that their mentors and role models were people within their immediate environment, including extended family members, social workers, and foster parents. Typically mentors and role models were of the same race, but not necessarily. The following is a list of things that mentors and role models do:

- encourage individual achievement and hold high expectations
- help youth develop strategies to cope with racism and discrimination
- share personal experiences regarding race or ethnicity
- pass on information about group history
- pass on information about family history
- teach customs and traditions
- inspire

Protective Strategies

Stevenson (1997) defines protective strategies as those that presuppose the world is racially hostile and worthy of distrust and "encourage youth to succeed despite external oppression" (p. 40). In the context of our present discussion, protective socialization strategies are those that provide children, and especially youth, with the necessary tools to cope with racism and discrimination in healthy ways.

Addressing Racism, Discrimination, and Stereotypes

Combating racism represents a potentially turbulent part of the journey toward a healthy ethnic identity. However, the presence of racism and discrimination and the dialogues youth have about them do function as catalysts for the racial/ethnic identity formation process. The practitioners and foster parents we interviewed implement a number of strategies to protect their children and

youth from the negative effects of racism and discrimination, and to provide them the tools to deal with these issues throughout their lives. Important to all strategies is to address the issue or incident at the moment it occurs.

> *"A" has come home suggesting that she's been treated unfairly, and the foster mom has been good to respond "maybe it has nothing to do with you being Black. What were you doing?" So she first determines whether this is true or not. Is it based on discrimination or was "A" talking in class or whatever the issue might have been?...If the aunt perceives that maybe it was discrimination she says "I don't want you to deal with this issue because it may be a problem for you. However, I am going to go to school with you and we're going to talk to the counselor.* (Practitioner Interview 1999)

Some critical features of dealing with racism and discrimination are illustrated in this account by a social worker. Practitioners and foster parents simultaneously deal with racism and prejudice, protect youth from it, and prepare them to deal with it on their own. When a youth feels that s/he has been discriminated against or treated badly because of racial or ethnic background, practitioners and foster parents take very deliberate steps to address the matter. They listen, clarify the issues, and intervene appropriately.

Listen to the child or youth. Just as it is ill advised to shy away from or avoid frank conversations with youth about the ill effects of drugs or teenage sex, it is not prudent to avoid conversations about race, racism, or discrimination. Practitioners and social workers described various incidents that occurred, mainly in school, where children and youth came home indicating that they had been victimized, made fun of, or ridiculed because of their racial or ethnic background. In these instances, foster parents – and practitioners working with them – stop, listen, and consider these incidents seriously. They recognize that racism and discrimination are part of life in society and are vigilant to protect against it.

Clarify Issues. Part of the listening process is clarifying issues. Children and youth are often unable to distinguish hostile from supportive racial intentions, they can be overly sensitive, and sometimes they can even try to blame others for their own indiscretions. After listening to the story, foster parents and practitioners help to clarify these issues, and if they determine there is a problem they respond directly.

Intervene. If they feel that the child or youth has been treated unfairly, they point out to the appropriate professionals how the act is seen as discriminatory. Practitioners suggested that in order to protect the child or youth, they often intervene themselves or work together with the foster parents to intervene, rather than allow the youth to handle the problem on her own. These interventions serve two purposes: to protect youths from the harmful effects of discrimination, and provide them with the skills to manage similar situations in the future.

Practitioners must be courageous at times in addressing stereotypes and biases with the youth and families on their caseload. For example, a social worker was trying to find a mentor for an African American female on her caseload. One mentor that was available was a Japanese

American woman, and when the social worker shared this, the foster mother indicated her approval stating, "they're smart" (Practitioner Interview 1999). The social worker took the time to address the issue with both the foster mother and the youth. She stated that the remark was a stereotype, albeit a positive one, and that stereotypes can always have a negative effect for the person who is stereotyped. She then took some time to relate the consequences of stereotypes to the experience of African Americans who have historically been the victims of many stereotypes, some positive and many negative. Had the social worker not addressed the issue, she would have sent a subtle message that stereotyping is appropriate.

Teach survival strategies. In order to prepare youth of color for life in a racially antagonistic society, there needs to be active training in survival behaviors. This includes talking to them about how they are perceived by society and how to act in certain situations. The fatal shooting of Amadou Diallo in New York City has intensified minority group anger over racial profiling and popularized a fact of life, long known in communities of color, that youngsters must be prepared to deal with police confrontations or suffer grave consequences. Time magazine (April 2000) reported efforts by community organizations, parents, teachers, and police themselves to teach African American youth how to survive dealings with the police.

Active Training: From Making Sense to Surviving

Beyond preparation to deal with racism and discrimination, youth of color must go through an active training process to learn how to decipher when a situation has discriminatory or racist overtones or is simply a clash of personalities, or a case of someone having a bad day. This process is active because it involves making conscious and explicit one's thoughts and concerns regarding daily events (Pinderhughes, personal communication, June 24, 2000). It is a process that people of color and members of other oppressed groups (e.g. women, gays and lesbians) must go through daily – sorting out why something happened (Pinderhughes, personal communication, June 24, 2000). Contemplation of issues is always complex. So, for example, whether the person of color does or does not get the job, either way s/he is left wondering if skin color was a factor.

RED FLAGS: WHEN TO WORRY

Despite the best efforts of foster families and social workers, there are times when the struggle for identity can be overwhelming. There are signs, or "red flags," that a problem or potential problem exists in the ethnic identity formation process. Red flags can be either environmental or behavioral. Environmental red flags are related to system responsiveness or attitudes of significant others, while behavioral red flags are related to specific child or adolescent behaviors that are indicative of poor ethnic identity development.

Environmental Red Flags Related to System Responsiveness

- Families do not provide critical proactive experiences (e.g. books, cultural or cross-cultural experiences) that promote healthy ethnic identity development.
- Absence of conversation about race/identity.

- No response to teachable moments.
- Absence of like peer group when there is an option.
- No birth family contacts prior to adolescence when there is an option.

Environmental Red Flags Related to Attitudes (could be held by parents or practitioners)

- Foster family unwilling to embrace cultural experiences of the child as their own.
- Embracing, condoning, or tolerating racially or ethnically biased remarks, including jokes and slurs.
- Endorsing a color-blind perspective or minimizing issues of race or ethnicity.
- Reluctance to socialize with members of the child's ethnic group.

Behavioral Red Flags

- Violent behaviors as a result of racial incidents.
- Discomfort with affirmations, praise or affection vis-à-vis one's race or ethnicity.
- Making fun of one's own racial or ethnic group.
- Making fun of others' racial or ethnic groups.
- Inability to attach to foster parents following placement.[25]
- No questions about heritage.
- Self-deprecating remarks.

The red flags listed here are simply a first step in a) identifying the obvious and less obvious ways that children, youth and families may indicate inhibited ethnic identity development, and b) developing explicit practice guidelines and procedures for ethnic identity development of children and youth in foster care.

Follow-up to this document is expected to occur in a number of ways. First, curricula will be developed that utilize an identity-focused approach to train practitioners and foster parents to be culturally competent. Second, research will seek empirical evidence to further our understanding of ethnic identity development among children and youth in foster care. Lastly, specific practice guidelines and recommendations will ensure that practices are sensitive to the needs of the people we serve. We hope this document will continue to evolve as agencies use and adapt the information herein to better meet the needs of children, youth and families from specific cultural regions across the country.

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[25] The inability to attach to foster parents is common among children in foster care and may, in fact, serve a normal adaptive function. Here, we would argue that practitioners need to consider cultural, racial, or ethnic identity matches in their assessment of the child's or youth's ability to attach.

SUMMARY AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The development of a healthy ethnic identity is a critical and challenging task for all youth, but especially for youth of color who are typically exposed to negative images and messages about their race and ethnicity. Without a healthy and coherent sense of self, youths are unlikely to lead well-adjusted, independent, and productive lives.

In this document we have provided a conceptual framework of identity formation in a society of multiple cultures. Drawn from academic research and theory, this framework identifies the essential components and stages of the ethnic identity formation process. Because there is no simple formula for supporting youth in this complex process, an understanding of the underlying theory is especially important in guiding practice.

Drawing upon interviews with caseworkers, supervisors, and focus groups with youths and families, we presented a portrait of how the process is complicated for Casey children, who must learn to simultaneously navigate a complex matrix of attachment and identity. This is why a supportive and sensitive foster family and guidance from responsive caseworkers and supervisors is so important.

In the final section we provided some basic prescriptives for practice and guidelines for proactive and protective strategies that caseworkers can use to lay a solid foundation upon which ethnic identity can be built. We identified "red flags," useful in alerting us to when the identity development process may be going awry. These red flags serve as signals that intervention on the part of the caseworker is warranted and necessary. While we provide no "cookbook" for the caseworker, we offer vignettes and examples throughout which we hope caseworkers will be able to draw upon in carrying out their own work.

While it is tempting to develop such a cookbook, we believe that it would be counterproductive. First, research is still quite young in the area; we are only beginning to understand what factors help or hinder identity development in youth, or specifically, the interaction between socializing messages (what adults say or do), and identity (how youth actually think, feel and behave in relation to their ethnicity). And, there is virtually no research about how these processes unfold for youth in foster care. That is why we relied so heavily on the personal experiences of Casey youth, families, and caseworkers.

Second, ethnic identity development is a very personal process that is ultimately unique for each child. This is true not only because of the wide array of ethnic mixes that children and youth come in, but also because of the unique background factors that bring children and youth to the attention of Casey in the first place. Ethnic identity does not happen in isolation. Many, perhaps most, youth hold multiple identities that interact to make them distinct. A young man can strongly identify with being Korean, American, gay, and a star soccer player. Or a young woman may take a great deal of pride in being African American, a feminist, and a future scientist. These multiple identities may operate smoothly and support each other or they may clash and cause conflict. For example, a Japanese American boy may find the path to becoming a scientist smoother than a Latina girl; an upper middle class White youth may find it easier to find support

for his gay identity than might a working class African American lesbian. A sensitive and responsive caseworker must be ready to respond to the whole child.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This should be viewed as a living document. It is a starting point, not the endpoint, in our understanding of how ethnic identity unfolds within the backdrop of the Casey system. We recommend that follow-up to this document occur through numerous venues. First, ***more research*** is needed to help us understand the stages of identity development for youth in the foster care system and how they are affected by multiple placements. This research can be "scientific" in the traditional sense of the word or it can be descriptive and ethnographic. For example, Casey caseworkers and cultural specialists can begin a concerted effort to collect case studies or examples and vignettes based on their individual practices and experiences.

Second, we recommend that a ***training curriculum or guidebook*** be established to guide caseworkers working with youth of color. The collection of case studies and/or vignettes can be at the heart of such an effort. As a first step, caseworkers could spend time discussing how to respond to specific dilemmas or issues collected in a case study/vignette-oriented workbook. Talking through responses to hypothetical but reality-based vignettes can help prepare caseworkers to deal with similar issues as they come up in the field. These discussions can also serve as a starting point for caseworkers to identify and examine their own views and feelings about ethnic identity development, a topic that is typically emotionally charged. In this sense, the learning curve for the child vis-à-vis identity development can run parallel to that of the practitioner. Overconfidence can be as much of an enemy to learning as ignorance. Ethnic identity development does not end for Casey children when they move out of the program and it is not completed just because one is a caseworker or practitioner.

The development of this framework was a difficult task; navigating the path between being overly specific and overly vague was not easy and at times we have done so better than at others. Still, our task was easy compared to that of the practitioners, families, and youths who must find a way to translate theory and guidelines into culturally competent practice. If five to ten years from now it is necessary to completely overhaul this document, it will better indicate that we have met our goal than if it remains wholly relevant as it stands.

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APPENDIX A

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Many of terms used throughout this document are ambiguous or involve words that have entirely different definitions elsewhere. This glossary is offered to avoid confusion over terms. (Please note that many of the definitions contain other defined terms. They are listed alphabetically for ease of cross-reference.)

Acculturation. The change that occurs when two different cultural groups come in contact. In general, the group with the least power is forced to change most but can retain distinctive cultural traits.

Assimilation: The loss of a separate identity and pride in distinctive cultural traits as a result of acculturation.

Autonomy. The sixth and last stage of White racial identity development. The individual internalizes the identity explored at the immersion/emersion (fifth) stage.

Adaptive socialization. The combination of proactive and protective messages that, over the course of one's socialization, serve the purpose of affirming one's ethnicity in positive ways, while preparing him or her for racism and discrimination.

Commitment. The final stage of ethnic identity development. The individual develops a secure and internalized ethnic identity, feels a sense of affirmation and belonging from his or her ethnic group membership, and develops multicultural competence.

Contact. The first stage of White racial identity development. The individual is uncomfortable around Blacks and may exhibit racism in crude ways.

Disintegration. The second stage of White racial identity development. Increased contact with Blacks can lead to increasing conflict surrounding one's Whiteness.

Emerging Awareness. The second stage in ethnic identity development. The individual begins to realize that there is some social significance to race based on an experience or experiences that lead to the abandonment of attitudes associated with stage 1 (relative unawareness).

Ethnic identity. Aspect of a person's identity that derives self-concept from his or her membership in an ethnic group together with the significance attached to that membership.

Ethnic socialization. The process of transmitting messages, directly or indirectly to individuals, that influence the way they behave, think and feel about their ethnic group membership.

Exploration. The third stage of ethnic identity. The individual enters into a deep examination of race and ethnicity in his or her life, which may include an ethnocentric worldview.

Explicit messages. Are usually, but not necessarily, consistent with proactive messages. They are unambiguous and clearly state the beliefs of the sender.

Immersion/emersion.[26] The fifth stage of White racial identity development. The individual asks the essential question, "What does it mean to be White in America?" and seeks a positive (non-racist) White identity.

Planned Messages. Are purposeful and thought out. Typically, proactive messages are planned.

Proactive Messages. Highlight the positive aspects of one's cultural history and traditions, and encourage children and youth to succeed as a function of their individual abilities.

Protective Messages. Remind and prepare children and youth to face hostility and racism in the mainstream culture.

Pseudo-independence. The fourth stage of White racial identity development. A personally jarring event can lead the individual to abandon the belief in White racial superiority, develop ambivalent feelings about being White, and search for a better definition of Whiteness.

Racial identity development. Typically refers to Black identity, which develops in response to living in a racially oppressive society.

Reactive Messages. Are sent in response to a situation that involves racism or discrimination. Reactive messages can sometimes be problematic because, if delivered in the heat of the moment, they may be inconsistent with the true intentions of the sender.

Reference group orientation. The extent to which one uses a particular group to guide one's feelings, thoughts and behaviors.

Reintegration. The third stage of White racial identity development. Continued contact with Blacks may foster anger, guilt, fear and anxiety towards Blacks and a belief in White racial superiority.

Relative unawareness. The first stage of ethnic identity. Race or ethnicity is seen as having little salience or may even be seen as negative.

Social constancy. Refers to an individual's understanding that an aspect of the social self (e.g. gender, race, ethnicity) is permanent and unchanging.

Subtle messages. Are typically sent unintentionally, and can include acts of omission. For example, not talking about race sends the subtle message that it is a taboo topic.

White racial identity development. Is based primarily on identity development in the context of Black-White relations and, specifically, the history of White racism against Blacks.

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[26] It should be noted that outside of this document, the term is used to describe a stage of Black racial identity development as well.

APPENDIX B

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

The conceptual framework provides the reader with an adequate overview of the empirical research on ethnic and racial identity development and socialization. However, the process of identity development is quite often better described through prose and literature. We wanted to provide a short list of books that deepen understanding of issues related to ethnicity and race, ethnic and racial identity development, and racism and prejudice. First, we provide resources that describe ethnic identity in prose through firsthand accounts or short stories. Second, we provide a list of books written by scholars or experts for parents and other adults (e.g. educators, social workers). Lastly, we have included a short list of some of the scholarly work that informed the development of the conceptual framework.

RESOURCES THAT DESCRIBE ETHNIC IDENTITY IN PROSE

Augenbraum, H., & Stavans, I. (Eds.). (1993). *Growing up Latino: Memoirs and stories*. New York: Hougton Mifflin.

> A compilation of literary works by Latino authors who, together, provide a deep and broad understanding of Latino culture. Deep in terms of providing multiple layers of "being" Latino in the U.S., and broad in terms of the various groups sampled in the book (Mexican, Chicano, Puerto Rican, South and Central American). These pieces describe the coming of age processes of its authors.

Cahill, S. (Ed.). (1993). *Growing up female*. New York: Penguin Books.

> A collection of twenty-three short stories about the coming of age process for women of color. They reflect the cultural and class diversity of the female experience in multicultural America.

Muse, D. (1995). *Prejudice: Stories about hate, ignorance, revelation and transformation*. New York: Hyperion Books for Children.

> This collection of short stories is for middle schoolers and up, and reveals the many facets of prejudice – racism, sexism, homophobia, classism – from the point of view of young people.

RESOURCES FOR PARENTS AND OTHER ADULTS

Brown, B. (1998). *Unlearning discrimination in the early years*. London: Trentham Books Ltd.

For those who think that young children don't understand issues of racism and discrimination, this book shows how such attitudes can develop at an early age and, more importantly, what to do about it. Filled with great vignettes, examples and practical suggestions.

Hopson, D. P., & Hopson, D. S. (1992). *Different and wonderful: Raising Black children in a race-conscious society*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

This book is written by a pair of practicing clinical psychologists who reveal the nuances of raising Black children from the perspective of parents and psychologists. Their recommendations are based on common sense and research.

Tatum, B. D. (1997). *"Why are all the Black kids sitting together in the cafeteria?" And other conversations about race*. New York: Basic Books.

Highly recommended. This book is a primer on the development of racial and ethnic identity and its importance for the psychosocial development of children and youth. The book is written by an African American female psychologist/scholar for parents and educators, and is very accessible. She provides numerous examples to illustrate points, and an excellent annotated bibliography of books for adults, youth and children.

SCHOLARLY ARTICLES

Berry, J. W., Kim, U., Minde, T., & Mok, D. (1986). Comparative studies of acculturative stress. *International Migration Review, 21*(3), 491-511.

An overview of research on the experiences of various acculturating groups. Though focusing on Canada, a number of figures and tables, as well as the data presented, help to disentangle the effects of stress on different groups. The ideas are very relevant to the experience of acculturating groups in the U.S.

Fine, M., Weis, L., Powell, L. C., & Wong, L. M. (Eds.). (1997). *Off White: Readings of Race, Power, and Society*. New York: Routledge.

This collection of research and theory deals exclusively with the complexity of Whiteness in America and abroad.

Helms, J. E. (1994). The conceptualization of racial identity and other "racial" constructs. In E. J. Trickett, R. J. Watts, & D. Birman (Eds.), *Human diversity: Perspectives on people in context* (pp. 285-311). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Helms defines race, ethnicity and culture, and clarifies the ways that these constructs intersect in the formation of racial identity.

Hughes, D., & Chen, L. (1999). The nature of parents' race-related communications to children: A developmental perspective. In L. Balter (Ed.), *Catherine S. Tamis-LeMonda* (pp. 467-490). Philadelphia, PA: Psychology Press.

This is as close to a review of the racial socialization literature as currently exists. It provides excellent examples of themes related to racial socialization, and some useful data from research.

Knight, G. P. & Bernal, M. E. (Eds.). (1993). *Ethnic identity: Formation and transmission among Hispanics and other minorities*. Albany: State University of New York.

This book is filled with research studies and reviews on ethnic and racial socialization and identity development.

McAdoo, H. P., & McAdoo, J. L. (Eds.). (1985). *Black children: Social, educational and parental environments*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

This collection includes research and theory on Black child development including early racial identity development and the social factors that influence it. Includes a classic piece by Boykin and Toms on racial socialization.

Phinney, J. S. (1990). Ethnic Identity in adolescents and adults: Review of research. *Psychological Bulletin, 108*(3), 499-514.

Phinney does a good job of reviewing the different ways that ethnic identity has been conceptualized and studied since the early 1970s.

Pinderhughes, E. (1995). Biracial identity–asset or handicap? In H. W. Harris, H. C. Blue, & E. E. H. Griffith (Eds.), *Racial and ethnic identity: Psychological development and creative expression* (pp. 73-93). New York: Routledge.

Provides a review of the research that moves beyond oversimplifying the issue of bi- racial identity as asset or handicap. Implications for practice are indicated.

Root, M. P. P. (Ed.). (1996). The multiracial experience: Racial borders as the new frontier. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

This book is rare in that it is a collection of scholarly works by authors who are themselves multiracial. There is a mix of empirical research and position papers, and they each contribute to an understanding of the multiracial experience as it intersects with gender, class, and sexual orientation.

Steinhauer, P. D. (1991). *The least detrimental alternative: A systematic guide to case planning and decision making for children in care*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Chapter 4 in this book, entitled Identity formation and the influence of life history and special status of the foster and adopted child, provides an excellent overview of the challenges to identity development for children and youth in foster care. It does not address the issue of race and ethnicity specifically, but it is a very informative piece for practitioners.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

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